

# THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

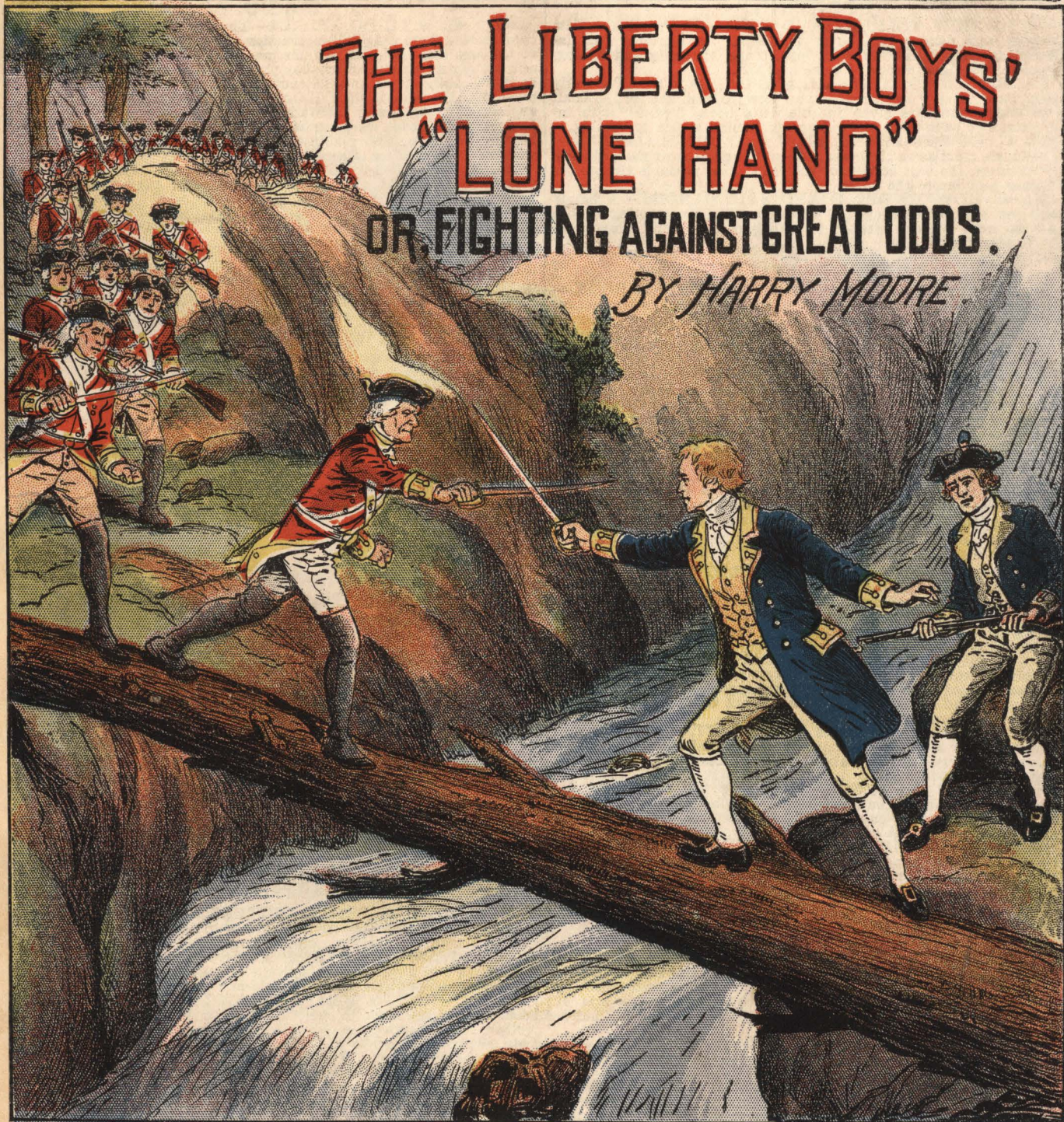
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NEW YORK, MARCH 21, 1902.

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## THE LIBERTY BOYS' "LONE HAND" OR, FIGHTING AGAINST GREAT ODDS.

BY HARRY MOORE

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## CHAPTER I.

### A STRANGE WARNING.

"Jove! I believe there is going to be a bad storm! I wish I could find a habitation of some kind. These southern storms are sometimes very severe."

It was just growing dark on a summer afternoon in South Carolina, in the year 1780. A young man of perhaps twenty years was riding along the highway—which, however, was scarcely more than a winding lane through the timber. A storm did seem to be brewing, as the young man had said. The low, threatening rumble of thunder could be heard in the distance, and as it grew darker, the flash of the lightning could be seen.

"Yes, there is going to be a storm, and quite a storm, too, if I am any judge," murmured the lone rider; "I wish I could come upon the house of a settler before the storm breaks. It won't be pleasant to be caught out in a thunder storm."

The lone rider glanced eagerly around, and in front of him, but could see no sign of a house. His horse was tired, and had evidently been ridden hard, but the young man urged the animal forward at a gallop.

"I must find shelter somewhere," the young fellow murmured. "I don't fancy getting soaked with rain, and perhaps struck by lightning."

Onward he rode. It grew darker and darker, the rising clouds aiding in accentuating the darkness and it soon was impossible for the youth to see more than a few yards ahead. Soon he could see scarcely at all, and the thunder rolled louder and more threateningly, and the flash of the lightning was more frequent and much plainer to be seen.

Soon the rider could see nothing at all save when there was a lightning flash, and he had to trust to the horse to find the way. Animals have better eyes for the night than do human beings, and the animal managed to stay in the road, though he was forced to drop back to a walk—which suited the tired brute, however.

Louder and more frequent sounded the thunder, and

it was evident that the storm would break soon. The rider kept urging the horse forward, and all of a sudden the brute stopped short and gave utterance to a snort of terror.

"What's the matter, Major?" asked the rider, attempting to urge the horse forward. "This is no time to stop. We must hurry forward, old fellow."

The animal's only answer was to paw the ground and snort in a frightened manner.

"Go on, Major!" ordered the rider, but the horse would not take another step forward.

"Well, that is strange," murmured the young man; "Major is an exceedingly sensible horse, however, and if he won't go forward there must be a good reason for it—ah! What is that?"

The youth leaned forward and stared into the darkness expectantly. By the light made by a faint flash of lightning he had caught sight of something standing upright in the road just in front. What it was he could not say as he had secured only a momentary, fleeting glimpse, but he would soon learn, for there would be more and brighter lightning flashes in a few moments.

Suddenly there came a bright flash of lightning and the rider gazed eagerly upon the object which had caused the horse to come to a stop. What the youth saw was a rough board, shaped like a coffin, and it was standing upright in the road with the wide end up.

"Well, well! What does this mean, I wonder?" the young man murmured. "I must investigate. I think there is some writing on that board; perhaps it will explain the mystery."

The young man leaped to the ground and striding forward, reached out and felt around till he was enabled to station himself right in front of the board.

"Now I'll be all ready to read when the next flash comes," he said to himself. "Jove! this is rather queer, when a fellow comes to think about it! I wonder what it means, anyway?"

But he was soon to learn. Just then there came a flash of lightning—in fact, a series of three or four, and by the



light thus made the youth was enabled to read what was written or rather scrawled on the board. At the extreme top of the board was a rudely drawn skull and cross-bones, and underneath, running downward, the words under each other, was the following:

"DICK  
SLATER,  
GO BACK!  
IF YOU  
PASS  
THIS  
SPOT  
YOU DIE!"

The words were not many and the youth succeeded in reading them during the time the light lasted, and when the light was gone and he stood in the blind condition in which the contrast between the dazzling light and the darkness left him, he was thinking.

"Now, who is it, down here, that knew I was coming?" he asked himself. "I thought my coming was not known to any one, yet it is evident that such was not the case. Somebody knows I am in this part of the country, and that somebody—or those somebodies—are not friends of mine, either. Whoever they are they knew I would pass along this road this evening and they have prepared a little spectacular entertainment for my benefit. Doubtless they expect that as soon as I see this board and read what is written there, I will turn and go back in a hurry. Well, they will be fooled! I don't think that Dick Slater will allow himself to be scared out so easily as all that."

The young man was indeed Dick Slater, who at that time was famous throughout the country on account of the wonderful work he had done for the great cause of Liberty. He was the captain of a company of youths of about his own age, and these youths were known as "The Liberty Boys of '76." They were famous, indeed, and had a great reputation for daring and bravery on the field of battle. As for Dick, he had earned for himself the title of "The Champion Spy of the Revolution."

Dick Slater was now down in South Carolina on secret business, and he had traveled all the way from the North under a fictitious name, and had supposed his identity unknown to any one south of New Jersey, yet here was his name written on the coffin-shaped board, with a warning for him to keep back and not go any farther in the direction he had been going.

Again there came a series of lightning flashes and again

Dick read the words on the board. He had not made any mistake; the words were there, just as he had seen them the first time, and his name was there, too.

"There is no mistake about it," the youth said to himself; "somebody doesn't want me to come any farther south, and has warned me away. Now, I wonder who it could be that would do that?"

Dick puzzled his head over the question for some time, but, of course, could not figure it out. Just as he was about to turn away from the board there came a dazzling flash of lightning, followed immediately by a loud crash of thunder. The horse reared up and snorted in terror, but Dick had hold of the strap and the animal could not get away.

"Jove! I don't like this!" murmured Dick. "I must hasten or I will be caught out in the rain, sure enough." Then he turned and seized hold of the board and pulled it out of the ground. The end had been sharpened and the board had been driven into the ground. He gave the board a toss to one side, and just as he did so there came another brilliant flash of lightning.

As the light died out and all was blackness, there came a voice from the roadside. "Dick Slater, beware!" was what the voice said, and it was said in a very threatening tone, indeed.

"Aha! so you're there, are you?" cried Dick.

"Yes, I'm here!"

"I suspected as much."

"Oh, you did?"

"Yes."

"That doesn't matter. You are going to be warned to turn back."

"Turn back?"

"Yes."

"Oh, no!"

"You will not?"

"No!"

"You had better."

"Why so?"

"You will lose your life if you go on."

"Do you think so?"

"I know it."

"You mean that you think you know it." Dick's tone was perfectly cool and calm.

"No, I know it. If you venture another mile farther you will never live to return to the North!"

"One question."

"Well?"

"Who are you?"



"I would be a fool to tell you, would I not?"

"Why so?"

"Why, then you would know who I am, and——"

"But you forget; I am doomed, and what harm can it do to tell a doomed man who you are?" "

There was sarcasm in the young man's tone, and the other seemed to recognize the fact, for he said:

"You are pleased to make light of me and my warning, I see."

"Oh, not that particularly. But say, why do you wish me to stay away from this part of the country?"

"That is my affair."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes."

"Well, it is my affair that I do not choose to stay away."

"You had better."

"I don't think so."

"I know so; your life will pay the forfeit if you advance another mile the way you have been going."

"I'll risk it."

"You mean to say that you are going to go on in spite of the warning?"

"That is what I mean."

"You are a fool!"

"Thanks for the compliment; you are another!"

"Why am I a fool?"

"For thinking that you could frighten me and make me turn back by having recourse to such a silly trick as this one."

"I didn't wish to harm you, and decided to give you fair warning, and that seemed to be the only way of doing it without revealing my identity to you."

"You might as well have taken the open, manly course, and come to me openly, my friend."

"You think so?"

"I know it."

"Why should I as well have done so?"

"For the reason that I will soon find out who you are, anyway."

"You think so?"

"Yes."

"Don't fool yourself, Dick Slater. You will never know who I am."

"I would be willing to wager something that I will know who you are, and before many days, too."

"Bosh! But take my advice and heed that warning."

There came another brilliant flash of lightning at this moment and Dick tried to get a sight of his unknown en-

emy, but could not. Doubtless the fellow was hidden behind a tree.

"Aha, you have pulled the board down!" said the voice.

"Yes; and tossed it to one side, out of the way."

"And you are going to go on in spite of the warning?"

"I am."

"Your blood be on your own head, then!"

"Of course."

"You will regret your action in disregarding the warning."

"Perhaps so."

"I know it."

"Oh, you are very knowing!" said Dick, sarcastically.

"Do you know what I think about you?"

"No, I don't know that."

"Then I'll enlighten you. I think you are a cowardly scoundrel!"

"What's that!"

"You heard what I said."

"Do you mean to call me a cowardly scoundrel, you rebel hound?"

"That is just what I do call you, and it is just what you are, too."

"'Tis false!"

"It is true!"

"I say it is not!"

"I can prove it."

"Do so, then—if you can."

"Very well; I will prove that you are a coward by challenging you to come out here in the road and fight me! You will refuse, I know, and that will prove that what I said is true."

"What is that? You dare me to come out in the road and fight you?"

"Yes. Accept the challenge if you dare!"

Dick awaited the unknown enemy's reply with eager interest.

## CHAPTER II.

### ACROSS THE DEAD-LINE.

There were a few moments of silence and then the unseen enemy spoke. "I refuse to accept the challenge," was what he said; "but it is not because I am a coward."

"Oh, it isn't?" in a mocking tone.

"No."

"Then why refuse?"



"For the reason that there is no need of my doing so."  
"Oh, there is no need?"  
"No; I will be able to kill you, anyway, and will not need to take any chances by meeting you in mortal combat."

"And that proves what I said—that you are a coward."  
"No, it does not."  
"How do you make it out?"  
"It is simply policy to refuse a personal encounter."  
"That is what you term it—'policy,' eh?"  
"Yes; would not I be a fool to meet you and take chances of getting killed, when by waiting a few hours I can put you out of the way, safely, without risk to myself?"  
"Well, yes—if you can do it. But can you?"  
"Can I put you out of the way?"  
"Yes—without risk to yourself?"  
"I most assuredly can—and will! Unless, indeed, you reconsider the matter and decide to heed the warning you have received."

"Well, I shall not do that."  
"You had better!" The tone was angry and threatening.

Dick Slater laughed scornfully. "Why, my dear sir," he said, "you don't know me at all if you think to frighten me back. It has the opposite effect. I would go on, now, if a thousand unknown enemies were ahead of me!"

"Well, you are a bigger fool than I thought you were!"  
"Thank you; so are you."  
"You don't know me, so how can you say that?"  
"But I will know you—and soon."  
"I think not."  
"You will see."  
"Bah! Turn back or you will never live to learn anything more!"

"Oh, yes I will!"  
"Not unless you heed the warning."  
"That I shall not do."  
"Then your fate is sealed!"  
"Threatened men live long."  
"It won't be so in your case."  
"We will see!"  
"Yes, you will very quickly see that what I have told you is the truth."

"I have no fears. Say, friend, before you go will you be so kind as to tell me how far it is to a house where I can get lodging for the night and shelter from the storm that is about to break?"

"You are a cool one, I must say!" There was a note of admiration in the tone.

"Why so?"  
"Why, to ask me such a question."  
"Oh, that is all right. You live in the vicinity, don't you?"  
"I won't say; but if such is the case—what?"  
"Why, you are informed regarding such matters, that's all. You know where there are houses, how far it is to them, and all about it; and I have always made it a rule that when I wish information I ask people who are likely to know what I ask about."

"That part of it is sensible enough, but have you stopped to think that I might easily direct you to the house of an enemy of yours, and a friend of mine, where we could easily put you out of the way and no one be the wiser?"  
"Oh, yes; but, you see, I make it a rule to meet only one dilemma at a time. Just now I am worrying about finding shelter from this storm, and I don't care a rap where I find it—whether in the home of a friend or an enemy. That will come up for consideration later. If agreeable, I will go home with you and we can talk this matter over as we go."

Dick said this in the most matter-of-fact tone imaginable, and the hearer was evidently amazed, for an exclamation escaped him. "You are a brave man!" he said. "Too brave a man to meet the death that awaits you, if you persist in going on after the warning you have received. I beg of you to reconsider and turn back. I give you my word that I shall hate to see one who is so brave lose his life without having a chance to defend himself."

"Well, I should hate to have it that way, too; but I don't fear that such a thing will happen. Just let me go along home with you and get in out of the storm, which is likely to break at any moment."

"Do you really mean that you would go with me—me, who has told you that I am your enemy and that if you go on farther south I will kill you?"

"Just try me and see whether I mean it or not. Tell me I may go with you and see what happens."

"Would you go with me?"  
"I would."  
"By Jove! I believe you mean it!"  
"I most certainly do!"  
"Well, I shall not let you come with me."  
"Why not?"  
"For the very good reason that I do not want you to know who I am."

"But you are going to kill me, so what does it matter?"  
"Since having had this conversation with you I have



made up my mind that a man who takes any chances with you, Dick Slater, is a fool!"

"Thank you."

"I have heard many stories regarding you; how you have made such a wonderful name for yourself by venturing right into the lines of the British, and often right into the British headquarters, and then making your escape, and I did not believe more than half that I heard; but I do now."

"Oh, you believe it, now?"

"Yes; and I do not propose to take any chances at all. You are a dangerous fellow; I can see that, now, and I shall be very, very careful."

"Well, that is your right and privilege. I will say that it will do you no harm to be careful as I might accidentally get the better of you, you know."

"I am convinced that you will do so if you have half a chance."

"I will do my best; but say, can you not at least tell me how far it is to the nearest house ahead?"

"You won't turn back?"

"No."

"Well, then, it is about three-quarters of a mile to the nearest house in that direction."

"Thank you."

"Think well before you decide to go forward!" There was deep menace in the tone.

"I will go on to the house, get under shelter, and then do my thinking," was Dick's quiet reply; "it is too threatening now, and the storm is too imminent for one to stop and do much pondering."

"All right; suit yourself."

"I shall do so; good-by."

Dick mounted his horse and rode away down the road, just as a brilliant flash of lightning came, and the unknown foe, if he was looking, and there was little doubt of this, could not help seeing that the youth was riding on toward the south.

Dick was made to realize that he was being watched, for immediately following the flash of lightning came the words:

"You have crossed the dead-line! Beware!"

### CHAPTER III.

ELSIE WARNS DICK.

"All right; I will be on the lookout for you, my friend!" he called back.

Then, as he rode onward, Dick kept up a rapid thinking.

Who was this mysterious enemy? Why was he so thoughtful as to warn him to go back instead of letting him come, and killing him? How had he learned that Dick was coming down into South Carolina?

These were difficult questions, and, of course, the youth could not answer them.

"I shall have to keep my eyes open now," Dick said to himself; "I rather think there is more than one enemy, and they will, no doubt, put their threats into execution and try to put me out of the way. They are certain to, after having gone to such trouble to warn me back."

It was a mysterious affair, and Dick presently dismissed it from his mind and turned his thoughts on finding the house the man had spoken of and getting shelter for the night.

The road crooked and turned and made quite a wide bend, but when the youth had gone about three-quarters of a mile he suddenly came in sight of a light.

"That is shining through a window, I take it," thought the youth; "well, I am glad to know that I have found a house at last. The storm is about to break."

Indeed, a few dashes of rain had already fallen and more would speedily follow, without doubt. The lightning was becoming much more frequent and the thunder louder and more continuous.

Dick rode up to the front door of the house, which, he could see—the lightning flashes making this possible—was a good-sized log one, and, dismounting, knocked on the door.

There came the sound of footsteps, and then the door opened. A man was shown against the light background, and he gazed out at Dick, inquiringly.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" he asked.

"I am a traveler and would like to stop over night with you," was the reply; "there is a bad storm coming and I don't wish to be out in it."

"I don't blame you for that; well, you can stay, I guess."

"Thank you," said Dick; "I will pay well for the night's lodging."

"You will do nothing of the kind," was the prompt reply; "you must remember that you are in the South, sir. We do not deal out hospitality and charge a man for it."

"Very well; we will not quarrel about that," said Dick. "I shall be glad to partake of your hospitality on any terms to-night."

The man stepped out and closed the door. "Come with me and I will show you where to put your horse," he



said. "Or, stay, you go in the house and I will put the horse in the stable. There is no need of your going."

"Oh, I can go just as well as not."

"No; you go in the house."

The man opened the door and half pushed the youth through the doorway and then closed the door again.

Dick glanced about him and saw a woman and a girl, both of whom rose and courtesied. The woman was perhaps forty-five years of age, the girl, seventeen or eighteen. The woman was not bad-looking; the girl was really beautiful.

"How do you do, sir?" the woman said. The girl said nothing, but she eyed Dick searchingly, and, he fancied, in rather a peculiar manner.

"Good evening, ladies!" said Dick, bowing gracefully and doffing his hat. "I am pleased to meet you, and you do not know how glad I am that I have gotten under a roof, for it is going to be a bad night out."

"You are right," replied the woman as a deafening crash of thunder was heard; "I fear that the storm may do considerable damage to the crops."

"I should think that it might do a great deal of damage," the youth replied.

"Pray, be seated, sir," the woman invited.

Dick took a seat.

"May I inquire your name, sir?" the woman asked.

"Yes, lady; my name is George Davis, and I am from Philadelphia." "

"Ah? And I am Mrs. Wilson. This is my daughter Elsie, Mr. Davis."

Dick bowed. "I am pleased to make the acquaintance of Miss Wilson," he said.

Feeling that they would be curious to know what he was doing so far from Philadelphia, Dick told them a story that he had told everywhere he had stopped while coming South. He said that he had relatives down in Georgia, and that he was on his way there for the purpose of staying through the winter.

Dick, who was an observant youth, fancied the girl looked at him more searchingly than might be expected, and he wondered at it.

"I wonder what makes her look at me that way?" he asked himself. "She looks as if she didn't believe what I have been saying."

"Philadelphia is a big city, isn't it?" she asked, presently.

"Oh, yes; quite a large city," replied Dick.

"But not as large as New York?"

Dick shook his head and shot a quick, searching glance

at the girl. "No," he replied, "Philadelphia isn't so large as New York. I don't know much about the last-named city, however, as I was never there but once, and then only for a couple of days."

"I have never been North," the girl said; "I was in Charleston once, and it is quite a fine city."

"Is it?" remarked Dick.

"By the way, Mr. Davis, have you had your supper?" asked Mrs. Wilson.

"No, Mrs. Wilson, I haven't," the youth replied.

"Then I suppose you are hungry."

"To tell the truth I am a bit hungry."

"I will set some food on the table at once."

The woman went into the kitchen and began the work of putting food on the table, and this left Dick and the girl in the room together. Dick, who was watching the girl, saw that she was nervous. She got up, looked at Dick, hesitated, and then, with a cautious glance toward the kitchen, said, in a low voice scarcely above a whisper:

"You are Dick Slater, the patriot scout and spy, are you not?"

Dick was surprised. He looked at the girl in amazement. "Here is somebody else who knows who I am!" he thought. "Jove! I don't understand this matter at all!"

He looked at the girl searchingly for a few moments and then replied: "And supposing I am Dick Slater, then what?"

"Then you are in danger—here!" There was a wild, frightened look in the girl's eyes.

"In danger here?"

"Yes."

"Do you mean that I am in danger in this house?"

The girl nodded. "Yes, you are in danger as long as you stay in this house."

Dick was amazed. His mind recurred to the warning sign he had encountered in the road, and to the conversation he had heard with the unknown enemy, and the thought came to him that this girl must know something about the warning so strangely given.

"I'll wager she knows who that man was that talked to me back up the road!" the youth said to himself. And then a thought struck him: Could the girl's father be the man in question?

After a little thought Dick decided that this was not the case. "He could not have gotten here ahead of me, I am sure," he thought; "I came at a fair gait and I don't think he could have beaten me here."

Still there was a possibility that he might have done so,



and Dick decided to question the girl. "From what or whom am I in danger?" he asked.

The girl looked worried. "I can't tell you that, sir," she replied; "I can only warn you that you are in danger so long as you stay in this house. You had better go on your way as soon as you have eaten your supper."

"But the storm, miss," said Dick; "just listen to that!" as a terrible clap of thunder shook the house and almost deafened them.

"It will be unpleasant and even dangerous to be out in the storm," she admitted, "but it is nothing compared to what may happen to you if you remain in this house all night."

"But who will try to injure me, miss? Surely you do not mean that your father will——"

The girl clasped her hands and a look of fear and agony appeared on her beautiful face. "Oh, please, sir, do not ask me any questions regarding that part of it!" she pleaded. "Believe me when I say you are in great danger here, however, and go on your way as soon as you have eaten your supper."

But Dick shook his head. Here was more mystery, and the youth was determined to fathom it if possible. If he remained, it would be dangerous, of course; but he would, in all probability, have the chance to locate the source from which he might look for danger so long as he was in this part of the country, and as he intended to be in the vicinity for a while it was important that he should learn this.

"No, I will remain," he said, quietly and firmly.

"But, sir, you are risking your life if you do so!"

"That is no new experience for me, Miss Elsie," with a smile; "I have been risking my life almost constantly for four years, and have gotten used to it. Indeed, I believe I should not know what to do with myself if I were not doing so."

The girl's face paled. "But you have never faced such terrible danger as you will have to face to-night," she murmured; "I am sure of that."

"Can you not tell of what the danger consists?" he asked.

The girl shook her head. "I must not!" she said; "you must not ask me to do so."

"Very well; I shall not ask it again. I thank you for the warning which you have given me, and I think that being forewarned I shall be able to take care of myself."

"I hope so, sir, but—I fear you will not be able to do so."

Dick was about to ask some more questions, but just

then Mr. Wilson entered the house, having returned from the stable, and as he came right on into the front-room where Dick and the girl were, there was no further chance for them to exchange words.

The man looked sharply at his daughter. Dick noticed this, and the thought came to him that Mr. Wilson must be one of those from whom he might expect rough treatment.

"Why are you not out in the kitchen, helping your mother, Elsie?" Mr. Wilson asked, and it was evident from the tone that he was not pleased to find her sitting in the room with Dick, and her mother out in the kitchen.

"She didn't say she wanted me to help her, father," was the reply. But she got up at once and went into the kitchen, casting a warning glance toward Dick as she did so. It was also an appealing look, and the youth understood it to be a mute way of asking him to heed her warning and leave the house.

But Dick had no thought of doing anything of the kind. He was into the affair, and he was determined to stick to it and see what came of it. Besides, it was a terrible night and he would not go out in the storm unless actually forced to by immediate and terrible danger. Nothing seemed to be threatening him at present and he could see no reason for leaving.

He entered into conversation with Mr. Wilson, and watched him closely without seeming to do so; he listened closely to the man's voice also to see if he could detect any similarity between it and the voice of the unseen enemy with whom he had talked that evening.

"I hardly think he is the same man," thought Dick; "the voice doesn't sound the same. Still, he seems to be a very intelligent man, and it is possible that he would be smart enough and have the ability to disguise it so that I would not recognize it when I heard it again."

Mrs. Wilson announced that supper was on the table, and Dick went in and took a seat. He was hungry and ate heartily, waited on by Elsie, who gave him a number of warning and pleading looks.

"She is certainly afraid that something will happen to me," thought Dick, "and as I flatter myself that I am a pretty good reader of people, I must say that I think it is because some one of her own people is mixed up in the affair to do me harm."

When Dick had finished he went back into the sitting-room, and, taking a seat, again entered into conversation with the man. Mr. Wilson was not at all talkative, but he was willing to converse, and then, too, Mrs. Wilson and Elsie were soon in the room and had something to say, and so the evening passed quite rapidly, and, on the whole,



pleasantly to Dick, for he took pleasure in talking to Elsie, who was really beautiful and evidently as sweet as she was beautiful. The lightning flashed, the thunder rolled, and the rain came down in torrents; but within the house it was comfortable and pleasant, and Dick could not help feeling that it was more pleasant than being out in the storm, even though there was some danger connected with being there.

It was ten o'clock when at last the youth announced that he would retire, and then Mr. Wilson lighted a candle and told Dick to come with him. The youth bade Mrs. Wilson and Elsie good-night and followed his host.

Dick had supposed that he would be conducted to an upstairs room, but such did not prove to be the case. The house was a larger building than he had thought, and he was conducted to what was virtually a separate cabin, being separated by a passageway which was closed up at the back and roofed over, but was open in the front. In here there were a lot of tools used on a farm, and some grain and other things.

Mr. Wilson opened the door and conducted Dick into the room of what was really a separate building. He placed the candle on a rude table and said: "I think you will be comfortable in here. It will be more comfortable than if I had taken you upstairs in the other building, for the roof leaks and you would have been soaked, probably, before morning. This roof is good. I must fix the leaks on the roof as soon as possible; I have been intending to do so, but other work kept coming up and I have put it off, and put it off, and it hasn't been done. Well, good-night."

"Good-night, Mr. Wilson. "Oh, I shall be comfortable in here. It certainly beats being out in the storm, at any rate."

"Yes, it will beat that."

Then the man left the room, closing the door behind him. As soon as he was gone, and Dick heard him close the door leading into the other house, he examined the door.

"Ah, just as I expected!" he murmured. "There is no way of fastening the door securely. If anybody wished to get in here they could do so, and I judge, from what Elsie told me, that somebody will want to get in. Let me see, what can I do to make me reasonably safe?"

Dick pondered a few moments and then looked around to see what articles of furniture there were in the room. About the only loose thing was a table, but it was quite a heavy affair, and it would be hard for any one to move the door if the table was against it.

"That is the best that I can do, I guess," thought Dick;

"well, I will do it, for I don't fancy the idea of having my throat cut while I am asleep. I prefer to be awake when that is tried."

He pushed the table across the room and placed it against the door in such a manner that it would offer considerable resistance when the door came against it. Just as he had finished and stepped back to take a look at his work he was startled by hearing a human voice speak the following words:

"That will do you no good, Dick Slater! You are doomed! You are in the trap, and nothing you can do will save you now! You are doomed! Ha, ha, ha!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### AN EXCITING NIGHT.

Dick started and looked all around him. Where did the voice come from? It had sounded almost as if the speaker was in the room, but Dick thought this was hardly possible. There was no place a man could hide. He glanced up at the ceiling. There was a small loft, and in an instant the youth bounded forward and was climbing up the steps leading to the loft.

"You won't find me in the loft!" came the voice, and now it had a mocking tone. "You can't find me at all. You might as well make up your mind that you are doomed, for you are! You are as good as dead and buried already! Didn't I warn you to stay away from this part of the country—to not come any farther south? You refused to heed the warning, rode onward, and now you are doomed. Serves you right! Ha, ha, ha!"

Dick did not stop but made his way up into the loft and looked all around. There was no one there, however. The speaker must be out of doors, Dick decided.

He made up his mind that he would soon find out where the fellow was. The youth was not one of the kind to let a matter rest. Fearing, however, that the man might take a notion to shoot him, Dick blew out the light, leaving the interior of the room in total darkness save for the occasional flashes of lightning, which served to light the interior of the room, faintly, for an instant.

"Ha, ha, ha! Afraid I might put a bullet through you, eh?" laughed the unseen enemy. "Well, I might have done so if you hadn't made it impossible by blowing out the light. You are certainly a pretty shrewd young man."

"You'll think so before you get through with me!" re-



torted Dick, whose blood was up. "You will find that I lack a good deal of being dead and buried, my friend!"

"Oh, I will, eh?"

"Yes; and I will wager that before you succeed in putting a finish to me I will do the same for you, or for some of your comrades, if you have any!"

"You are plucky, young man, and I must acknowledge that I admire you for it; but all the same it will not save you. You must die!"

"Some time, I will admit; but I don't intend to shuffle off the mortal coil just yet a while."

"You may not intend to do so, but you won't have anything to say in the matter."

"You think not?"

"I am sure of it."

"Well, you will find out that you are mistaken."

"I don't think so."

"I do."

Dick had been talking for a purpose. He wished to locate the voice, if possible; or at least discover from which direction it was coming. He listened intently when the man was speaking, but for some reason could not decide what direction the voice sounded from.

"That beats me," he thought; "I wonder where the fellow is?"

He was determined to try to discover the man's whereabouts, if possible, however, and believing he was out of doors the youth proceeded to move the table. In order to keep from making a noise that would apprise the unseen enemy of what he was doing, Dick lifted the table and carried it away, placing it down very softly. Then he stole back to the door and listened for a few moments.

"Well, what are you doing?" suddenly asked the voice. "Have you gone to sleep?"

Even then Dick could not locate the direction of the voice, and instead of answering he opened the door quickly and stepped through the doorway.

Just at this moment a brilliant flash of lightning lighted up everything, and to Dick's surprise and delight he saw standing in the middle of the passageway between the two cabins a man of large stature and commanding presence. The man, as well as Dick could see in the brief glimpse secured of him during the flash, was dark-faced, with bushy, black beard. He had on a long cloak and wore a touch hat, however, and this made it difficult to see what sort of looking man he really was. Undoubtedly he had been taken by surprise, for there was a sudden exclamation and the sound of a hasty movement.

Dick bounded forward with the intention of seizing the

man, but his hands encountered only thin air. The big fellow had gotten out of the way with greater quickness than the youth would have thought possible.

"Stop! Come back here, you cowardly scoundrel!" cried Dick. "Come back and I will choke the life out of you!"

"Fool!" came back the reply. "Be warned and get away from here at once! Get your horse and ride back to the North, where you came from, and your life will be spared; otherwise you die before the sun rises in the morning!"

"Bah! stop threatening and do something!" retorted Dick. "If you hadn't fled like the coward that you are I would have given you a lesson you would not soon forget."

"I did not flee because I was afraid to meet you; but because I am not yet ready to strike."

"Oh, that was it, eh?"

"Yes."

"And I suppose you wish to strike when I am asleep."

"No, not necessarily. I care not if you are awake at the time. You will be helpless, anyway."

Just then the door leading into the main building opened and Mr. Wilson appeared, outlined against the background made by the lighted room.

"What is the trouble?" he asked, looking at Dick in seeming amazement. "Don't you like your quarters?"

"Oh, yes, I like my quarters very well," replied Dick, "but I was disturbed."

"Disturbed?"

If the man was not surprised, he was a good actor, and the next moment Mrs. Wilson and Elsie, the latter looking pale, appeared just back of the man.

"Who disturbed you?" asked Mrs. Wilson.

"I don't know who he was."

"It was a man, then?" asked Mr. Wilson.

"Yes."

"Did you—did you see him?"

Dick imagined the man was rather anxious.

"Yes, I saw him," the youth replied, watching Mr. Wilson closely.

"You did?" The man appeared to be startled.

"Yes."

"Did you see his face?"

"Not very plainly. I could see that the fellow was dark-faced and had a black, bushy beard; that was about all."

"Where is he now?"

"He ran away; but I guess he hasn't gone far."

"You had better come in the house, Mr.—Davis," said Elsie, her voice trembling; "the man might shoot you!"

"Elsie!" said Mr. Wilson, reprovingly, "what affair is



this of yours?" Then to Dick: "I beg your pardon; I didn't mean by that that I wish you to remain out where you will be in danger, and perhaps it will be as well for you to come in the house."

"Oh, no," replied the youth; "I will return to the room and go to bed. Good-night."

Then he walked across the passageway and re-entered the room and closed the door. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson and Elsie gazed out into the passageway for a few moments, and then the former closed the door and fastened it.

Dick, as soon as he was in the room, closed the door but he did not fasten it. He waited till he heard the door across the way close, and then he quickly opened the door and stepped out into the passageway. He had noticed a box back near the rear end of the passage. The box was partly filled with corn. Stepping quickly back, Dick climbed into the box and sat down. His head was below the top of the box and he would not be seen if any one should be looking his way when it lightened.

"Now if that fellow comes prowling back here, I will grab him!" thought Dick, grimly. "Jove! I'd like to get my hands on him! He has had a good deal to say to me, and I want to say a few things to him!"

Dick was silent and motionless for several minutes, during which time he listened for some sound that would tell him that his unknown enemy was returning. He could hear nothing to indicate the man's return, however. The thunder was all that he could hear. That and the patter of the rain, which seemed to be trying to wear holes through the roof, so hard did it come down.

Presently Dick's patience was rewarded, however. He heard a slight noise, and, listening intently, was sure it was the sound of footsteps. The man was returning!

"I guess he thinks he will bother me some more," thought Dick; "well, if he isn't careful, I may bother him a bit."

He continued to listen intently, and soon made out that the man was again in the passageway between the two buildings. The youth soon discovered something else, too: The fellow was not alone. He knew there was some one with him, because he could hear the two whispering. They came closer to where he was hidden, and he could distinguish the words.

"He is a bold young fellow, isn't he?" Dick heard one say.

"He is, for a fact!" was the reply.

"It seems a shame to put such a brave man out of the way."

"It is necessary, however. If we go to work to put our

plans into execution while he is in this part of the country he will interfere, and we don't want that to happen."

"No, of course not."

"We warned him to go back, you know."

"Yes."

"And he laughed at the warning and persisted on coming on; so now his death will be on his own head."

"That is true; still, I believe I should be willing to give him one more chance."

"In what way, do you mean?"

"Why, I mean that after we have captured him and taken him to the rendezvous we shall give him a chance to return to the North, if he will promise to go and stay away from this part of the country."

"Do you think he would keep his word?"

"I am sure that he would. Brother Tom says that he is a fellow who will keep his word always."

"Well, we'll talk that matter over after we have made him a prisoner of him."

"Say, don't you think that we are likely to be interfered with by Marion and his men, or by Sumpter and his gang?"

"Yes, there is danger of it; but they are in the South already, and we have taken them into consideration, but they have this young rebel come down here and go to work and raise a force of young rebels, as he would no doubt do—that would not do at all."

"No, that would complicate matters, and make it impossible for us to make a success of our plans."

"You are right; he must be either killed or driven out of the country."

"When shall we attempt to make him a prisoner—right away, or wait till he sleeps?"

"We will wait. I was foolish enough a while ago to speak to him, when if I had not done so he would have gone to sleep very quickly."

"Well, he is just the sort of fellow to go to sleep, anyway. He will think you were simply trying to frighten him and won't be afraid."

There was some conversation on topics which did not interest Dick, and then the two stole away and the youth was left alone in the passageway.

"Well, well! So they really mean to kill me, or frighten me out of the country, eh?" thought Dick. "I wonder what their plans are? I wish I knew; I should most certainly remain here and try to spoil them. But I believe I will remain, anyway, and there is little doubt that I will soon find out what the gentlemen are thinking of doing."



The question for Dick to answer now, was: What should he do? Should he slip out to the stable, secure his horse, mount and get away from that part of the country? Or should he remain, stand his ground and try to checkmate the men at their own game? Dick finally decided upon the latter course, even at the risk of being captured.

But should he return to the room? He believed this would be dangerous. The enemy would look for him there, while if he were to stay out of the room they would be puzzled.

"Jove, I believe I will remain where I am," thought Dick; "this is a large box, and the shelled corn is almost as comfortable as a bunk. Yes, I'll stay here and see what happens."

Dick made himself as comfortable as possible, and waited to see what would turn up. One hour, two hours passed, and then the youth heard the sound of footsteps. Somebody was coming.

He listened intently and was not long in deciding that there must be at least a dozen men in the party which was approaching. The thunder storm had passed and now there was nothing to interfere with or make hearing difficult.

The newcomers spoke not a word. They had doubtless laid out their plan of procedure before coming, and the youth heard them open the door leading into the room in which he had been and enter.

A few moments later the sound of smothered exclamations of anger, surprise and discomfiture came to Dick's ears from within the room.

"They have discovered that I am not there," he thought; "I had an idea that would be a surprise to them."

Then the thought came to Dick that they would probably look for him in the passageway, and he quickly burrowed down into the shelled corn and covered his body. Only his head was out, and it happened that there was an old piece of carpet in the box; this he pulled over his head, which was in one corner, and he did not believe he would be discovered.

Soon the men came forth from the room and stood in the passageway, talking in low, excited tones.

"Maybe he is somewhere around here," Dick heard one say.

"Let's make a search in the passageway here," said another.

This met with favor, and they began moving around. One felt all around the box and even reached down into it and touched the shelled corn and the piece of carpet,

but did not discover that the person he was looking for was there.

"Jove! that was a narrow escape!" thought Dick, after the danger was past.

"I guess he has taken French leave," said one, after the search had been finished.

"But I don't see how he managed to get away without our knowing it," from another; "we kept a close watch on every side of the house."

"Oh, you forget that this fellow is Dick Slater, the most cunning spy of the Revolution," said another. "I have heard that there was never a picket line that he could not slip past at night, if it was at all dark—and it has been very dark, you know."

"Yes, that's true."

"Well, what shall we do now?"

"Go back to the rendezvous, I judge."

"That will be the best thing to do, I suppose. But I have an idea. Let's go to the stable and see if the fellow's horse is gone."

"That's a good plan; and if his horse is there he is still somewhere in the vicinity."

"Well, I don't know about that; perhaps he has taken the alarm and gotten away for good. He might have been afraid to try to get his horse, you know, and a man would be foolish to risk his life for a horse when there are so many to be had for the taking."

"That's true, too."

The men then took their departure, leaving Dick alone in the passageway. He did not remain there long, however. A thought struck him, and he decided to put it into execution at once. They were hunting him; now he would turn the tables and follow them.

"They have a rendezvous, and are going to go to it," he said to himself; "well, I will follow them and learn where this rendezvous is. Then, if ever I wish to find it, I will know where to look. I have made up my mind to remain in this vicinity until I solve this mystery and find out what those men are up to, and all that I learn will be of benefit to me."

Dick climbed out of the box and stole out of the passageway and after the men, whom he could hear ahead of him. He paused at a little distance from the stable and waited, while they entered and looked to see whether or not his horse was there. It was quite dark, and there was no danger that the youth would be seen, though he was close enough to hear the men's conversation.

They emerged from the stable—the two or three who had entered—and told the rest that the horse was there.



"The rebel isn't far away from here," said one.

"Well, as to that it is impossible to say," said another; "he may be several miles away. He has had a couple of hours to get away in, and if he has made good use of his time he may be five or six miles away."

"Yes, that's true," was the reply. "Well, let's get back to the rendezvous; I'm tired and sleepy."

"So am I."

"And I."

Then the men set out through the timber and Dick followed them. Strange to say they did not seem to think of such a thing as that the youth for whom they had been searching might follow them. Doubtless they thought he was frightened and that he was getting away from that part of the country as rapidly as possible.

Dick followed the men through the timber, the distance of a mile and a half at least, and then they came to a river. There were rather steep bluffs, and in the foot of one of the bluffs was a cavern. The entrance to the cavern was concealed by bushes—as Dick learned by feeling about after the men had entered—and it would, no doubt, be hard to see even in the daytime.

Dick decided to see all that he could, and so he crawled through the bushes and then through the entrance, and was in the cavern. At the farther side of the cavern the men were grouped, having lighted a candle and taken seats about it. Dick counted them and found that there were fourteen of them.

He remained where he was for perhaps half an hour and listened to all that was said, but the men were sleepy and did not say anything that gave him any information of value. Presently they threw themselves down on blankets spread on the floor, and, knowing that there was nothing to be gained by staying, Dick crept back out of the cavern, through the bushes, and then made his way back toward the home of the Wilsons as rapidly as possible.

Had it not been that Dick was a born woodsman, he would not have been able to find his way back through the timber and darkness; but, as it was, he did not have much difficulty, and three-quarters of an hour later was back at the Wilson home. He entered the room that he had occupied first, and placing the table against the door calmly lay down in the bunk and went to sleep. He was confident there would be no more trouble that night; nor was there. He slept soundly till morning, and then walked in on the Wilsons as coolly and unconcernedly as if he had not been hunted by a band of desperate men during the night. Dick was pretty sure that Mr. Wilson was in with the men who had been after him, and when he saw the look on the man's

face he was sure of it. Mr. Wilson stared at the youth as if he were a ghost.

"You—here?" he gasped.

Dick assumed surprise. "Why, certainly," he replied, "didn't you expect to see me this morning?"

Mrs. Wilson was pale, but Elsie, Dick was sure, looked happy.

"No—yes—that is—yes, of course I expected to see you here," the man stammered; "I don't know what I mean by saying what I did."

"The affair of last night, when you were disturbed by the voice of some one, as you remember, must have caused you to say what you did," his wife suggested.

"Yes, that must have been it."

Mrs. Wilson hastened to lay an extra plate, and Dick after making his toilet, sat up to the table and ate a hearty breakfast.

"You were not bothered any more last night, then?" asked Mr. Wilson presently.

"Oh, no; I went to bed and slept soundly till this morning."

Dick thought it as well not to say anything about his having been searched for by a band of men. He was sure that Mr. Wilson knew they intended to try to capture him anyway, and he did not wish the man to know that he had followed the band and discovered its rendezvous.

After breakfast Dick announced his intention of going on his way. Mr. Wilson asked him where he was going and if he was bound for Charleston. Dick told him that he was going through the city, but would stop there only an hour or so as he was in a hurry to reach his relatives in Georgia.

Then he bade good-by to Mr. and Mrs. Wilson and Elsie and mounted his horse and rode away. He had not more than got around the first bend in the road, less than a quarter of a mile distant, before Mr. Wilson plunged into the timber and started in the direction of the rendezvous. He ran part of the way and walked the rest of the distance at as rapid a pace as possible, and in less than half an hour entered the cavern.

The members of the band were seated on blankets spread on the floor, and were eating their breakfast.

"Hello, Wilson!" greeted one. "Why here so early?"

The speaker was a big man, dark-faced and bushy bearded, and had Dick been there to see him he would have identified him as the man who had paid him the visit and threatened him during the storm of the night before.

"See here, did you fellows come back after you were



there, Gabe, and try to get into the room where that rebel was?"

The men stared at Wilson in amazement. "Yes, we not only came back and tried to get in, but we did get in, eh, boys?" remarked the man addressed as "Gabe."

The others nodded assent.

"What! You don't mean it?" cried Wilson.

"Yes, we mean it."

"Well, that is strange!"

The men looked at him inquiringly. "Why is it strange?" asked Gabe.

"Why didn't you make a prisoner of him, then, if you were there and in his room?" was the counter-question.

"Why didn't we make a prisoner of him?"

"Yes."

The big man burst into a hoarse laugh, in which he was joined by the rest. Then he presently got control of his laughter, and said: "The reason we didn't make a prisoner of him is very simple: He wasn't there."

"What's that?"

"I say, he wasn't there; so we couldn't very well make a prisoner of him."

"You say—he—wasn't—there?" Mr. Wilson spoke slowly and haltingly and was evidently greatly surprised.

"That's what I said; he wasn't there."

"Are you sure?"

"Am I sure?"

"Yes."

"Of course I'm sure! The boys'll tell you the same—eh, boys?"

"Yes," said one, "we were in the room and he wasn't there; nor was he anywhere around, for we looked in the passageway and all around the house."

"You don't mean it?" almost gasped Mr. Wilson.

"Yes, we mean it," replied Gabe; "but what's the matter? What is there about it that is so surprising?"

"Why, just this: He was there!"

Gabe leaped to his feet in amazement, while the rest of the men stared. "You don't mean it!" he cried.

"Yes, I do; he was there all the time!"

Gabe was silent a few moments, and then he shook his head. "No, he wasn't there," he said, decidedly; "we looked carefully, and he could not have escaped us."

"Then where was he?" asked Mr. Wilson.

"I don't know; but what made you think he was there all the time?"

"Why, the fact that he was there this morning."

Exclamations escaped the lips of the men.

"There this morning?"

"You don't mean it!"

"Surely you are mistaken!"

"You don't mean to say that he was in that room this morning!"

"Yes, he was there this morning," declared Wilson; "he came out and walked into the house as bold as you please, ready for breakfast."

"Great guns! is that a fact, really?" exclaimed the big man.

"Yes; you may be sure I was surprised, for I supposed you had made a prisoner of him and taken him away."

"No, we couldn't find him, as I have told you. And you say he was there this morning?"

"Yes."

"Where is he now?" There was an eager look on the man's face.

"He has gone on his way."

"When did he start?"

"Just before I started here. He has been gone about an hour, I judge."

"Well, he won't go far. You know, Tom Dean told us that he was coming down here for the purpose of communicating with Marion, the 'Swamp Fox,' and as Marion is somewhere in this vicinity the rebel will remain near here till he communicates with the man he is looking for."

"I suppose there is no doubt regarding that?"

"No; and all that is necessary is for us to locate Mr. Dick Slater once more and then we will lose no time in making a prisoner of him. Then if he will not agree to return to the North at once we will put an end to him!"

"I think it would be best to put an end to him and not risk his keeping his promise, if he makes one," said one of the men.

"Oh, if he makes the promise he will keep it," said another. "Brother Tom says that Dick Slater was never known to break his word."

"Well, do as you like, but if I had my way I wouldn't risk it. If he should get wind of what we intend doing he would co-operate with Marion, and by getting up a band among the Whig young men of the neighborhood he could spoil our plans."

"Well, we will see to it that he doesn't spoil our plans," said Gabe, grimly. "We will either make him leave the country or we will put him where he can do us no harm!"

Gabe asked Mr. Wilson some more questions, and then the latter took his departure and made his way back to his home.

Meanwhile, what of Dick?



## CHAPTER V.

## AMONG PATRIOT FRIENDS.

Dick had gone not more than three-quarters of a mile when he was treated to a surprise. Out into the road stepped Elsie Wilson!

The youth reined up his horse and stopped instantly. "What! You here, Miss Elsie?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," the girl replied; "I wished to have a talk with you in private, and so I slipped away and headed you off."

Dick leaped to the ground and advanced to where the girl stood, leading his horse behind him.

"You must have run most of the way," he said.

"So I did," with a smile; "but I am used to exercise so it won't hurt me."

"Why did you wish to have a talk with me, Miss Elsie?" the youth asked.

"I wished to tell you something; but come in among the trees, for some one might come along the road, and I don't want any one to see me talking to you."

"Very well." Dick followed the girl, and when they were far enough in the timber so that no one would be likely to see them, the maiden paused and turned and faced the youth.

"Your name is not Davis, is it?" she asked abruptly.

Dick hesitated and laughed, and then shook his head and said: "No, Miss Elsie, it is not. I am not afraid to tell you this, for something tells me that you are my friend."

"So I am!" the girl declared, earnestly. "I am a true friend to all patriots."

"I thought as much."

"Yes, I am a patriot; but father is a Tory."

"I suspected that, too."

The girl looked at Dick curiously. "How did you escape being captured last night?" she asked.

Dick smiled. "It was quite simple and easy," he replied. Then he told her how he had hidden in the box of shelled corn, in the opening between the two buildings.

"Well, that was quite an idea!" the girl exclaimed. "I was afraid you would be captured, and would have warned you more than I did had I dared. But I was afraid father would suspect me."

"You did warn me, Miss Elsie. I was on my guard, and so was not taken by surprise when the men came. Still, the leader of the band was foolish enough to warn me by talking at me through the cracks in the logs, and I would have been on my guard, anyway."

"You knew there was a band of men looking for you, then?" the girl said.

"Yes; and I know the leader is a big, dark-faced, black-bearded man. What is his name?"

"Gabriel Johnson; though he is usually called 'Black Gabe.'"

"Black Gabe, eh?"

"Yes."

"And he is the leader of this band?"

"He is."

Dick hesitated and was silent a few moments, during which time he looked at the girl half-inquiringly. Then he said:

"Miss Elsie, would it be asking too much if I were to ask you what this band is, and what it intends doing?"

The girl shook her head. "No, indeed," she replied; "that is really why I came here to see you. I wished to tell you what the band is, and what it intends doing, for I hope that you will be able to spoil the plans of the men in question."

"Then they intend trying to do something that is wrong?"

"Yes; they are Tories, all of them, and as it happens that the Tories are in the minority in this neighborhood they have banded themselves together, secretly, and they are planning to burn the homes of all the Whigs and kill as many of the men as possible."

"So that is their scheme, is it?"

"Yes."

Dick pondered a few moments, and then said: "Your father is a member of this band, you say? But I know that he is."

"Yes."

"That makes you out quite a heroine, Elsie!" said Dick, "to inform against a band of which your father is a member."

The girl flushed slightly. "But he isn't my real father, Mr. Slater," she said.

Dick was surprised. "He isn't?" the youth exclaimed.

"No; he is only my step-father. My mother is his second wife, and I was eight years old when they were married."

"Well, you are a true-hearted girl, anyway, and doubtless you are going against the wishes of your mother in this matter."

"Well, she rather leans to the patriot side of the question, but she thinks a good deal of father and doesn't say anything to let him have an idea that she feels that way



about it. Still, I am sure she would be happy if the patriots should triumph in the end."

"Do you know when the Tories intend to put this plan of theirs into operation, Elsie?"

The girl shook her head. "No, I do not know," she replied; "but I think I could find out."

"Very well; find out, if you possibly can, and let me know as soon as you do so."

"I will do so, but where will I find you?"

"That is something I don't know myself. Perhaps you could help me out in that matter. I wish to remain in this vicinity. Where would be a good place to stay?"

The girl thought a few moments, and then her face lighted up. "I know," she said; "a mile farther on you will come to a house; it is the home of a patriot by the name of Lawrence. I think they will be glad to let you stay there as long as you like, especially when they learn that you are going to help them protect their home from the Tories."

"Very well; I shall try the Lawrences, and I have no doubt that they will be willing to let me stay there."

"I am sure of it."

"Will you come there when you have the information that I wish?"

"Yes, I'll come there, Mr. Slater."

"Very well; and now, what about your father? I should be sorry to see him get killed, now that you have been so kind. In case the Tories try to put their plan in execution he will be in danger."

"True; I'll try to get him to stay at home instead of going with them when they start on their trip of destruction."

"That will be a good idea. But, by the way, Miss Elsie, there is one thing that puzzles me: Why did not the Tories under Black Gabe kill me at the first instead of warning me to go back and not come any farther south?"

"That was on account of the influence mother and I have over father. We told him that it would be murder to kill you without warning, and we got father to get Gabe to promise to warn you before trying to injure you."

"Then I owe you and your mother quite a good deal, Elsie!" said Dick, feelingly.

"Oh, don't speak of it, Mr. Slater," the girl said; "we were only too glad to be able to save your life. We had heard so much about you and your brave 'Liberty Boys,' and we thought it would be terrible for you to ride blindly to your death."

"Well, I thank you both, earnestly and sincerely!" said Dick, feelingly. "And now, if I can manage it, I shall, in

return, see to it that your father does not meet death at the hands of any of the patriots."

"Thank you!" said Elsie.

After some further conversation the two parted, Elsie going back to her home, while Dick mounted his horse and continued on his way.

It did not take him long to reach the house Elsie had spoken of, and as he rode up a young man of perhaps nineteen or twenty years was standing near the front gate. The youth eyed Dick curiously, and became all attention when he saw that the newcomer was going to address him.

"Does Mr. Lawrence live here?" asked Dick.

"Yes, sir," replied the youth; "do you wish to see him?"

"I suppose I will have to see him, yes. But are you a member of the household?"

"I am Mr. Lawrence's son, Fred."

"Ah, I am glad to make your acquaintance!" said Dick, as he leaped to the ground and approached the fence against which the youth was leaning.

"Who are you?" the young man asked, somewhat bluntly.

"My name is Slater—Dick Slater."

Dick spoke in the most matter-of-fact tone imaginable, but his words had wonderful effect. The youth straightened up, and, staring at Dick, eagerly and excitedly, cried: "You don't mean to say you are Dick Slater? Surely you are not the real Dick Slater?"

"What do you mean by 'real Dick Slater'?"

"Why, there is a great patriot scout, spy and soldier whose name is Dick Slater, and I thought at first you might be him; but, of course, you aren't. He is away up North."

Dick smiled. "I am the only Dick Slater I ever heard of," he said quietly.

The other looked at the speaker eagerly. "You don't mean to say that you are the real Dick Slater, then?" he cried.

"I am Dick Slater, and I am from the North."

"And are you a patriot scout, spy and soldier?"

"Yes."

The young man was visibly excited. "Do you really mean to say that?" he exclaimed, and then a thought struck him. "Are you the captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?" he asked.

Dick nodded. "Yes, I am the captain of 'The Liberty Boys of '76,'" he replied.

"Hurrah!" cried Fred Lawrence, throwing his hat in the air. "Hurrah! Great guns! but I never expected to



have the pleasure of making your acquaintance, Dick Slater!"

Dick smiled. "I am glad to know that you are pleased on account of getting to make my acquaintance," he said; "it will simplify matters considerably."

"How is that?"

"I'll tell you: I wish to get to stop here with you a few days, and if you are pleased to know me there is some probability that you will be willing to let me stay."

"Some probability!" in an extremely sarcastic manner. "We shall be delighted to have you stay here as long as you like, Dick Slater! We shall esteem it a great honor."

"Well, I shall esteem it a great favor for you to let me stay, I assure you."

"Have you had breakfast?" asked Fred. "Because if you haven't I will run into the house and tell mother and sis to set the table for you."

"I have had breakfast, thanks," said Dick; "I stayed over night at the home of Mr. Wilson and ate breakfast there."

Dick saw Fred give a start, and he looked at the speaker sharply. "Why did you not remain there if you wished to stay in this part of the country?" he asked.

"I didn't think it would be a healthy place for me."

The youth looked at Dick searchingly. "What made you think that?" he asked.

"Because Mr. Wilson is a Tory, and associates with Tories, and I didn't think it would be a good place for me to stay."

"Oh, I understand! Mr. Wilson is a Tory, I know, but his wife and daughter are not." Fred looked at Dick sharply as he said this.

"I know they are not," Dick replied; "Elsie told me that."

Fred Lawrence started. "So Elsie told you that, did she?" he asked.

"Yes; and she told me to come here; that she thought you folks would let me stay."

"Ah, did she?"

"Yes."

"Well, she knows we are patriots, and thought that we would be willing to keep a patriot."

"I judge that was it."

"Yes, and she was right; well, come with me. We will put your horse in the stable and then go to the house."

Fred opened a gate and Dick led his horse through. They made their way to the stable and the horse was placed in a stall, and was unbridled and unsaddled and given some

hay, after which Fred conducted Dick to the house and introduced him to the other members of the family.

Of these there were three—Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence, and Rosa, a girl of perhaps seventeen years, and a very pretty girl, too.

They welcomed Dick heartily, and he made up his mind that he should enjoy himself here, first-rate. He was glad, too, that he would be instrumental in saving the home of this family from the destruction intended for it by the Tories, and he did not wait long to tell them why he was there and why he wished to remain a while.

Exclamations of astonishment and anger escaped the lips of the four when they heard of the plot that was on foot to destroy all the homes of the patriots of the neighborhood.

"That is terrible!" said Mrs. Lawrence. "Goodness! I hope you will be able to put a stop to their work, Mr. Slater!"

"I think it will be possible to do so if there are many patriot young men in the neighborhood."

"There are quite a good many," said Rosa.

"I guess there are as many as fifty or sixty," said Fred.

"That ought to be sufficient for our purpose," said Dick.

"I think there are more Whigs than Tories in this immediate neighborhood," said Mr. Lawrence.

"So I have understood. Well, we will be able to checkmate the Tories, I think. All that is necessary is that we organize a company and be on the lookout for the Tories, and when they start out to burn and destroy, we can go to work and put them to rout."

"How will we know when they are going to go to work?" asked Fred.

"Elsie Wilson is going to let me know," replied Dick; "her father is one of the Tories, you know, and she said she thought either she or her mother could get the information out of Mr. Wilson."

"That will be all right," said Fred.

"I think so; and it will enable us to stop the Tories before they can do much, if any damage."

"Yes, that will be fine," said Rosa.

"When will we go to work to get up the company?" asked Fred.

"Right away; to-day, if possible. The sooner the better, you know."

"Well, I can help you with the work to-day, if you like. I have nothing particular to do, have I, father?"

"No; and if you had it would not matter. I know of nothing else that is so important as to get the company



ganized so as to be in readiness to protect our homes as soon as the Tories show signs of activity."

"That is the way I look at it, father," said Mrs. Lawrence; "this is the most important thing of all, and Fred need not think of having to work on the farm at all until after he has given Mr. Slater all the assistance necessary."

"Thank you," said Dick; "Fred will be able to render me very valuable assistance, as he knows everybody and knows whether or not they are patriots. It will simplify my work wonderfully to have him help me. Then, too, the people will have confidence in me, where otherwise they might not have."

"Oh, as soon as they learned who you were it would be all right," said Fred; "everybody in this part of the country has heard of you and your brave 'Liberty Boys.'"

"Yes, indeed!" said Rosa, with a bewitching smile intended for Dick's exclusive benefit. There was no doubt about it; Rosa was very favorably impressed by Dick's appearance, and being a little bit of a neighborhood belle and coquette, she had about made up her mind to try to catch the handsome, manly looking patriot youth.

After some further talk Fred and Dick mounted their horses and set out. They visited the homes of twenty patriot families before noon, and enlisted about thirty youths for the company, which was to be known as "The Patriot Band."

Then they went back home for dinner, after which they set out again and put in the afternoon visiting fifteen families, and enlisting twenty youths. This made a total of fifty, and Fred and Dick both thought it would be a sufficient number for their purpose.

"The Tories haven't so many in their band, I know," said Fred, "for there aren't enough of them in this vicinity."

But trouble was brewing, owing to the fact that the daughter of one of the patriot households was the sweetheart of a Tory youth of the vicinity. The girl's name was Lucy Harley, and she lived about a mile from the Lawrence home. Her lover, the Tory youth, was named Lon Durley, and he lived only about a quarter of a mile away from the Harleys. He had seen Fred and Dick at the house, and being of a jealous nature he had hastened over here when the two had gone and had called Lucy aside and began asking questions regarding the youths who had just been there.

"Are you going to throw me over for that fellow, Lawrence, Lucy?" he asked in a surly tone.

"Of course not, Lon," was the reply; "what put that silly notion in your head?"

"Well, what was Fred Lawrence doing here, then, if it was not to see you?"

"He came to see Sam." Sam was her brother, and a true-hearted patriot.

"Oh, he came to see Sam, eh?" Lon's tone implied doubt.

"Yes, he did."

Lucy realized that Lon was jealous and doubting, and she was eager to get him out of such a state of mind, for she really thought a great deal of him and expected to marry him.

"What did he want to see Sam for?"

Lucy hesitated. She knew why Fred and Dick had been there and what their business was with Sam, but she was aware that Lon was a Tory and she didn't know whether she ought to tell or not. Lon noted her hesitation and became more jealous than ever.

"You daren't tell!" he cried. "I don't believe he came to see Sam at all. I believe he came to see you."

"No, he didn't," the girl protested.

"Then tell me why he came to see Sam? Do that, and I'll believe Fred came to see him; otherwise I shall refuse to believe it."

Lucy still hesitated. "I don't think I ought to tell," she said.

"Why not?"

"Because they—he came to see Sam on business that concerns only themselves, and although I know what it is, I don't think I ought to tell."

"All right; then I shall believe Fred Lawrence came to see you and not to see Sam."

It was evident that Lon Durley was a stubborn and determined youth, when he wished to be, and this seemed to be one of the times when he wished to be.

"I hate to tell; I really don't think I have any right to do so."

"Who was the fellow with Fred?" asked Lon.

Again Lucy hesitated. "I—I—don't think I ought to tell that, either," she stammered.

"Great guns!" cried Lon, angrily, "you don't seem to want to tell anything! What's the matter with you, anyway? There's altogether too much secrecy about this business to suit me!"

Lucy looked worried. She didn't wish to let Lon go away angry, and she didn't like to tell him, either; but at last, after he had grown almost angry enough to go away, she told him who it was that was with Fred, and what they had been there for.

"So that is who the young fellow with Fred was, is it?"



Lon said, in surprise. "Jove! what is he doing down here, anyway?"

"Of course, I don't know what his business down in this part of the country is," said Lucy; "I only know why he and Fred came to see Sam."

"And they are going to get up a company to be known as 'The Patriot Band,' are they?"

"Yes; but, Lon, you mustn't tell any one. It wouldn't be right, for I ought not to have told you."

"Oh, I won't tell anybody, Lucy."

Lon did not stay much longer. He was satisfied now that Fred Lawrence had not come over to see Lucy, and his jealousy was allayed to such an extent that he was very pleasant, and kissed Lucy when he said good-by.

Lon went back home, and it happened that his father was in the yard and asked the youth where he had been.

"Over to Harley's," was the reply.

"Humph!" was the man's exclamation. "Can't you do enough in the way of courting of evenings and Sundays, without going over in the daytime on week days?"

"I saw some fellows over there, father, and went over to see who they were," replied Lon; and then a thought struck him. He knew his father was a member of the band of Tories under the leadership of Black Gabe, and the thought came to him that the members of said band ought to be placed in possession of the information he had secured from Lucy Harley. True, he had promised Lucy that he would tell no one, but his own father's life was at stake and Lon, although not a bad youth at heart, thought he would be justified in telling what he had learned. Having so decided, he went ahead and told his father what Fred Lawrence and Dick Slater were doing.

"Ha! so that is what they are up to, is it?" Mr. Durley exclaimed. "I saw them pass here a while ago and wondered what they were about."

Lon noticed that his father did not seem surprised when told that the young man with Fred was Dick Slater, the noted scout, spy and captain of the famous "Liberty Boys," and he said as much, and asked his father if he had known who the youth was before he (Lon) told him.

"Yes, I knew who he was," was the reply; "I learned, last night, that Dick Slater was in the neighborhood."

"Oh, that is it, is it?" remarked Lon. "You found it out while you were away from home last night?"

"Yes." Mr. Durley did not tell his son that he had been one of the members of the band that had tried to make a prisoner of Dick Slater, but such was the case.

Mr. Durley took his departure as soon as Lon went into the house, and he walked rapidly through the timber, head-

ing in the direction of the cavern by the riverside, where Dick had seen the band when he had followed them the night before.

Mr. Durley reached the cavern after three-quarters of an hour of rapid walking, and was successful in finding Black Gabe in, as well as two or three more.

"Hello!" greeted Gabe. "What's up? You don't usually show up here in the daytime."

"There's trouble brewing, Gabe," was the reply.

"Trouble brewing?"

"Yes."

## CHAPTER VI.

### BOB ARRIVES.

"How do you know?"

"Because I do. I just found it out a short time ago, and came here as fast as I could to warn you."

"Of what does the trouble consist?"

"I'll tell you: You know Dick Slater, whom we tried to capture last night?"

Gabe frowned. "Yes, I know him; we'll capture him to-night," he said.

"I don't know whether we will or not."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that we ought to have killed that rebel the moment he showed up in this part of the country."

"Well, as to that, I think so, too; but you know Wilson didn't want us to, and as I am sweet on that pretty daughter of his, I listened to him. But what do you mean, anyway? What is in the wind?"

"I'll tell you. This fellow Dick Slater, accompanied by Fred Lawrence, is going around the country to-day organizing a company of young fellows to be known as 'The Patriot Band'!"

"You don't say so?"

"I do."

"How do you know this?"

"My boy, Lon, told me."

"How did he find it out?"

"His girl, Lucy Harley, whose parents are patriots, you know, told Lon. Dick Slater and Fred Lawrence were at her house to get her brother Sam to join the company, and she heard all about it."

"I see; and I suppose by that that this Dick Slater has learned, in some manner, that we have an organized band,



and that we contemplate doing the Whigs of the neighborhood some damage, eh?"

"It looks that way."

"I wonder how he found it out?"

"It is hard to say."

"You are right; well, the main thing is that he knows."

"You are right; that is the main thing. Now we will be the ones who will have to look out."

"I guess you are right; there are more Whigs than Tories in this neighborhood."

"Yes, and with such a leader as Dick Slater they will be dangerous foes."

"So they will; we undoubtedly made a mistake in not killing him at once instead of trying to frighten him away."

"Yes, that was a bad mistake."

"Now, I hardly know what to do."

"I'll tell you what would be a good plan, Gabe."

"What?"

"To go to Charleston and get a lot of the soldiers to come and assist us to burn the homes of the Whigs—and to thrash the band that Dick Slater has organized."

Black Gabe was silent for a few moments. Then he nodded his head. "I think that is a good idea," he said; "I don't want to give up beaten, and there is only one way to avoid it, and that is by getting the soldiers to help us, as you suggest."

"I think that will be a good plan."

"Yes; the only objection is that the soldiers will want to take most of the valuables that are found in the Whig houses for their own use. We won't get much out of it."

"No, I suppose not; but it will be better than to give up and not attempt to do anything."

"Oh, yes; we won't give up in that fashion."

"I'm not in for it."

"No; we will do what we set out to do, even if we don't make much by it. I have grown tired of hearing the Whigs talk about 'Liberty' and 'Freedom' and all that sort of thing."

"And so have I. They don't seem to think we have any right to be loyal to our king."

"That's right; well, I will set out for Charleston at once and will get back just as quickly as possible."

"All right; I will go back home, as the folks will wonder what has become of me."

Mr. Durley started back home, and Black Gabe, after giving the two or three men who were in the cavern some instructions, took his departure. He went to the home of Mr. Wilson and found that man at the house.

"I wish to borrow a horse, Wilson," said Black Gabe.

"Very well," was the reply. "Where are you going?"

"To Charleston."

"To Charleston?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

Black Gabe glanced toward Mrs. Wilson and Elsie, who were within hearing, and then said: "I'll tell you while I am bridling and saddling the horse. Come to the stable with me."

The two went to the stable and Elsie hastened to get where she could overhear what was said by the two. By making a circuit she was enabled to approach the rear of the stable and there, hidden, she overheard most all that was said. As Gabe told Wilson all about Dick Slater getting up the band of youths to protect the Whig homes, and how he was going to Charleston to get a lot of British soldiers to come and help them burn the Whig homes and thrash "The Patriot Band," Elsie was well repaid for the trouble she had gone to.

"So that is what you are going to do, is it, Black Gabe?" she said to herself. "Well, that is something that Dick Slater and Fred should know at once, and as soon as you are gone I think I shall make it my business to take the news to them."

Elsie hastened back to the house, and when Gabe and Mr. Wilson came forth from the stable she was at work in the kitchen with her mother.

Gabe mounted the horse and set out, and Mr. Wilson presently went to work in the field. As soon as he was out of the way Elsie put on her bonnet and set out through the timber. She reached the home of the Lawrences just before noon, and had been there but a few moments when Dick and Fred put in an appearance.

Elsie immediately called Fred to one side and told him what she had overheard Black Gabe say, and Fred at once called Dick and gave him the information.

"So Gabe has gone to Charleston to get the redecoats to come and help them, eh?" the youth remarked.

"Yes, and I am afraid that means trouble for us, Dick."

"Quite likely you are right; still, perhaps we may be able to do something to neutralize the odds against us."

"But what can ye do?" asked Fred.

"That is the question."

"What would you suggest, Dick?" Fred was not much for originality, and had no knowledge of warfare, so left everything to the young "Liberty Boy."

Dick was silent a few moments, pondering, and then he said: "I'll tell you, Fred, if we could communicate with



the 'Swamp Fox,' or Sumpter and his men, we might get them to aid us."

"Yes, I know; but how are we to communicate with them?"

"That is a hard question to answer, of course. You haven't any idea where we would find either of them?"

"No; I have heard of them as being in the vicinity of Charleston, two or three times, but they have never to my knowledge been in this part of the country."

"Well, I'll tell you what we'll do, Fred; we will send out a couple of boys, with instructions to search far and near for Marion and Sumpter, and if they find either we will have some valuable assistance and will not have to go it entirely alone in this affair."

"All right; we'll send a couple of the boys out this afternoon and tell them to beat up the swamps for miles around. That is where they will find the men, if anywhere."

"I have understood that they stay in the swamps, save on the occasions when they swoop down upon the enemy."

"Yes; they have to stay there. They haven't very many men, and it is only once in a while that they dare venture to do anything."

"I know that; well, send the boys in search of them as soon as possible for there is no knowing how soon we may need assistance."

Elsie did not stay long as she was afraid her father might be suspicious, but bidding the youths good-by, took her departure.

Dick and Fred put in the afternoon getting recruits for their company, as already stated, and when they had finished they ate supper, feeling that they had done a very good day's work.

"We have a company of fifty young fellows, all of whom will be ready and willing to fight," said Dick; "and we will give the redcoats and Tories a good fight, even if we don't get any assistance, and have to fight them alone."

"Yes, the boys will fight, I am sure of that," agreed Fred.

The youths were out in front of the house, talking, and suddenly they heard the sound of hoofbeats. They looked up and saw a horseman approaching, and as he drew nearer an exclamation escaped the lips of Dick.

"Great guns, it is Bob!" he cried. "I wonder what he wants down here?"

"Who is it, did you say, Dick?" asked Fred.

"He is my friend and comrade, Bob Estabrook, my right-hand man in the company of 'Liberty Boys.'"

"And he didn't come South with you?"

"No; and I had no idea he intended coming. He must have been sent."

"That is rather queer."

"I should say so."

Dick ran out to the fence, and as Bob reined up his horse and leaped to the ground, cried out: "Well, Bob Estabrook! what in the world are you doing down here, anyway?"

"Oh, I just came down to see what you were doing," with a laugh.

As he spoke Bob leaped to the ground.

Dick looked sober and serious. "Has anything happened at—at home, Bob?" he asked.

"Oh, no, Dick," was the reply; "don't get frightened, now, for there is nothing to be scared about at all. I have come down here just to be coming; just for the fun of the thing. There was nothing doing, and I decided to come down and have some fun."

"Are you sure, Bob?"

Dick was still somewhat suspicious that something might be wrong up North, and wished to know the truth.

"Certainly I am sure, Dick. I got to thinking, after you had left, and the next day I went to the commander-in-chief and asked permission to come down here. He gave me permission to do so and I set out—and that's the whole story. I'm glad I have found you, and now if you are going to get into any trouble and have any sport with the redcoats and Tories of the South, I am going to have a hand in it. You won't have to go it entirely alone."

"Well, it won't be much different, as two of us are not so very many, Bob."

"It is twice as many as one."

"Yes, that's true; well, there is going to be some sport, as you call it, though it may not be so very funny for us by the time we get through with it. I wish I had all the boys down here."

"They would have been tickled to death to come, Dick."

"I have no doubt regarding that."

Dick then introduced Bob to Fred, who was delighted to make the acquaintance of another of the famous "Liberty Boys."

"Have you had supper, Bob?" asked Dick.

"No; I stopped at a house, back a mile or so, and was going to ask for supper and a night's lodging, but I asked, first, if a young man, a stranger, had been along here within the past twenty-four hours, and the girl told me that such a fellow was at a house a mile or so farther on, and so I came right on down here, for I was sure it was you."

After they had put Bob's horse in the stable and given



it a feed of grain and hay, they went to the house and Bob was introduced to Mrs. Lawrence and Rosa. The supper had not yet been cleared off the table, and so Bob sat down and ate a hearty meal.

"Take it all in all, I'm glad you came, Bob," said Dick that night when they had gone to bed.

"And so am I!" was the reply. "There is going to be something to do down here, and I am never so happy as when there is a chance to be up and doing. I would rather wear out with work than rust out."

"And so would I, Bob."

## CHAPTER VII.

### DICK'S BOLD MOVE.

"There they come, Bob!"

"Yes, there they are, sure enough, Dick!"

"Jove! I wish we had had an hour more time!"

"Yes; if we had had another hour we would have been able to chop this footbridge in two and drop it into the stream, and then the redcoats could not have gotten across without going several miles out of their way."

"Right; and that would have given Fred and the boys time to get things in shape for making a strong fight."

"So it would."

"Well, it can't be helped now."

The speakers were Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook. They were standing beside a stream which flowed through the timber at a point halfway between the home of Fred Lawrence and the city of Charleston. The stream, while not very wide, was very deep, and had high, steep banks, up or down which it would be almost an impossibility to climb. Near where the youths stood a giant tree lay across the stream, from bank to bank, and this had been used as a foot-bridge so much that it was flattened on top by the wear from many feet.

It was mid-afternoon of the day following the one on which Dick and Fred had gone around and organized the company of youths for the purpose of defending the homes of the Whigs. Dick and Bob had left the home of Mr. Lawrence immediately after dinner and had gone to where the main road crossed the stream; here there was a wagon-bridge, and they had chopped the supports in two and dropped the bridge into the water so that when the British should come along they would be unable to get across. Fred had told them of the old tree which was used as a

foot-bridge, and after dropping the wagon-bridge into the stream Dick and Bob had hastened to the old tree and had begun chopping at it with the intention of dropping it into the stream. Before they had worked more than five minutes, however, Dick's quick eyes had caught sight of the brilliant uniforms of some of the redcoats, and had spoken as above.

There were several large boulders near at hand and the youths took refuge behind one of these and watched the redcoats as they approached.

"Hadn't we better beat a retreat, Dick?" asked Bob. "They will be across the log before very long, and it won't be good for us to be here when they do come across."

"Wait a minute, Bob."

The redcoats were approaching at a rapid walk, and their commander, a major, judging by his uniform, was in advance. Dick counted them and found that there were one hundred of them.

"That isn't such a very great number," he thought; "even with the addition of the Tories the enemy will number not to exceed one hundred and twenty, and I believe that with the fifty youths I can make it exceedingly lively for the redcoats."

Closer and closer came the redcoats, and Bob became somewhat nervous. "We had better be getting away from here, Dick," he said; "they will come across and nab us the first thing you know."

The officer stepped upon the tree trunk and started across, and Bob was just on the point of again telling Dick that they had better be getting away from there when his comrade surprised him by suddenly drawing his sword and leaping forward and advancing to meet the officer.

The major, as well as his men, was surprised, and he halted and stared at Dick in amazement.

"Ha! what does this mean?" he exclaimed. "You are certainly bold, Sir Rebel!"

"You will find out what it means very quickly!" said Dick, significantly. As he spoke he flourished his sword in a suggestive manner.

"You don't mean that you will fight me?" the officer cried.

"Yes; and I am going to kill you!"

"Going to kill me, eh?"

"Yes; I have nothing against you of a personal nature, but you are the commander of this force which is on its way to burn patriot homes, and perhaps murder patriots who may attempt to defend themselves, and I think that it is necessary that I should kill you as then your men will be without a leader and will not know what to do."



"You are frank."

"And why not?"

"Are you not afraid that my men will shoot you dead?"

"They dare not fire at me for fear of hitting you."

"Ah, that is the secret of your boldness in advancing to meet me, is it?"

"Partly."

"Well, you will be sorry for your temerity in facing me."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

As the officer was speaking he drew his sword and flourished it in a dexterous manner.

"If you will give me your word of honor that you will take your men and return to Charleston, I will agree to not injure you," said Dick.

"How kind of you!" sneeringly.

"Then you refuse to give me your word to do this?"

"I most assuredly do!"

"You will lose your life!"

The officer laughed derisively. "Why, young fellow," he said, "I am the best swordsman in the garrison at Charleston, and one of the best in the British army; so there is not much danger that a green, American youth like you can injure me."

"Don't be too sure of that. I may be a green, American youth, but I am a good swordsman, just the same, and there are a large number of redcoats who could testify to that fact were they alive!"

"Bah! you are a boaster!"

"No; simply telling you the truth for your own good."

"Well, you needn't trouble yourself any further in that respect, young man. I am amply able to take care of myself and do not need any guardian or even advice with regard to how to comport myself."

"Your blood will be upon your own head, then!"

"Oh, yes—if there is any of my blood spilled, which I do not think will happen, it will be my own fault."

"And you refuse to turn back and return to Charleston?"

"I most assuredly do!"

"Very well; you have been warned."

"Oh, yes, you have been very kind!" sarcastically. "I have no fault to find with you on that score."

"You are pleased to sneer, but you will realize, before we get through with this, that I was doing you a kindness, just the same."

"You may think so."

"I am sure of it."

is all; and you have been giving advice where you should have been receiving it."

"That remains to be seen."

"True; but it is a fact, nevertheless. If you are wise you will avoid this duel and will take to flight. If we cross blades it will be the end of you."

"I have no fear on that score."

"There is an old saying, you know, that 'Where ignorance is bliss, 'twere folly to be wise,' but it doesn't apply here, for if you were wise it would be good for you—would save your life, in fact."

"There is no need of wasting further time in talk," said Dick, quietly; "I have warned you and you refused to take advantage of the warning, and I have no desire to receive advice from you."

"Well, you may be sure that I, a British officer in the king's service, do not wish to receive advice from a beardless rebel!" This was said with a scornful air.

"As you please," said Dick, calmly. "I think, however, that before you get through with the 'beardless rebel' that you will be willing to acknowledge that he is equal to any man who ever faced you, even though the man may have had whiskers a foot long."

"Bah! defend yourself!"

The next instant the swords clashed together. The duel was on!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FIGHTING AGAINST GREAT ODDS.

It was a strange and awe-inspiring spectacle, the duel between Dick Slater and the redcoat commander. They stood on the log and fought desperately, while Bob and the redcoats watched breathlessly.

Bob was seated on a boulder near at hand, and he never thought of such a thing as that the redcoats might shoot him. He was too much interested in the duel between his beloved comrade and the British officer to think of anything else.

Fortunately it was the same with the redcoats. They had eyes only for the combatants, and did not think of Bob at all. He was as safe sitting there in plain view of the enemy as he would have been had he been a mile away.

The duel raged with fury. The officer had quickly found that he was not pitted against a novice, as he had imagined would prove to be the case; on the contrary, Dick very



quickly taught him that he would have all he could do to take care of himself.

The realization that in this beardless youth he had met one who was at least his equal, was sufficient to enrage the officer, who was egotistic where his swordsmanship was concerned, and he went to Dick furiously, in order to end the affair as quickly as possible, as he did not like to have his men see that he had met one who was anything like his equal.

And when he found that, even though he was attacking with all his energy and doing his best to beat down the other's guard, he was unable to do so, and could, in fact, make no progress, he became still more enraged and attacked with still greater fury. Still Dick held his own with seeming ease, and maintained his position on the log. He had not yet been forced to give an inch.

"Curse you! you are a young demon!" the officer finally exclaimed.

"No, there is nothing demoniacal about me," said Dick, quietly; "I am merely an American, and a beardless one at that."

"Who taught you to handle a sword?"

"No one."

"Bah! tell that to the marines!"

"You don't believe me?"

"No; you have had lessons and instruction from the best swordsmen in the world or you could not have stood before me as you have done."

"You must have a high opinion of your abilities with the weapon."

"I know what I can do with the sword. I have already told you that I am one of the best swordsmen in the British army."

"But surely you are not. You must have been jesting; else a beardless rebel could not foil you at every turn, as I am doing."

"You are a fine swordsman, boy though you are."

"Thanks."

"But I will kill you yet!" fiercely.

"No, I don't think you will do anything of the kind."

"You will see!"

"And so will you!"

The two had talked as they fought, and if the redcoat thought to throw Dick off his guard by talking, he was badly fooled, for the youth was a veteran and had been engaged in many such affairs, and had indulged in conversation while so engaged, so was perfectly at home. He could fight and talk at the same time and do as good work with the sword as if he were not saying a word.

The British officer realized this, and so, finding that he could not gain any advantage by talking, he stopped and put all his energies on the work at hand.

Clash, clash, clash! went the weapons. The sparks flew, and the combat was terrible to say the least, and it seemed a very even affair, too. Neither seemed to be getting any advantage over the other. One thing, however, Dick had worked almost wholly on the defensive so far. It yet remained for him to show what he could do in offensive work.

It was coming time for him to show his abilities in this line, too, for the British officer was becoming somewhat winded as a result of his exertions. He stopped pushing the affair with such vigor, and the combat was considerably toned down. Now Dick spoke:

"I will give you one more chance, sir," he said; "if you will give me your word of honor that you will return to Charleston with your men and give up this work of burning and pillaging the homes of the patriots, I will let you go unharmed."

"Curse you, I will promise nothing!" the man cried in a rage. "I ask nothing at your hands, dog of a rebel! It is to the death—to the death, do you hear? This is to be your life or mine! I will accept nothing at your hands!"

"Think well, sir," said Dick; "life is precious, and you should not throw it away."

"I shall not do so. If I lose my life it will be because I cannot help myself, but I shall not withdraw from this combat. I would be disgraced before my own men, and I would rather die than that such a thing should happen. No, I am a soldier, and am not afraid to die, if it is necessary."

"That is the proper spirit, I judge; but at the same time I do not think it a good plan to give up your hold on life to avoid a feeling of discomfiture because of defeat at the hands of an enemy. That is vanity, sir."

"Be it so; it matters not what you may call it, I would rather die than acknowledge myself beaten by a boy."

"Very well; have it so. Now, look out for yourself! I have given you plenty of opportunity to save your life, but you have refused to avail yourself of the opportunities, and I shall not hold myself accountable for your death."

"No; no one is to be blamed by me if I fall—which I do not as yet think it possible that I will do."

"Here goes for you, sir!" said Dick, and then he began an attack which was very fierce indeed. He soon had the officer on the defensive, and it was evident that he was outclassed, that he was not the equal of the youth as a



swordsman, and that he lacked considerable of being his equal physically.

The officer was forced to give ground, and this enraged him greatly. It was evidence to his men that he was getting the worst of the encounter, and he did not wish to have the scene prolonged. He decided to end it as quickly as possible, and he began a counter-attack which he hoped would result in winning a victory for him.

He reckoned without his host, however. Dick was prepared for just such an attack, and quickly took advantage of an opening, and wounded the man in the shoulder. A wild cry of rage and pain escaped the lips of the officer.

"Cursed dog of a rebel, you have wounded me!" he almost shrieked. "Now it is your life or mine, and that very quickly, too!"

He went at the youth in such a manner that it was sure to bring the contest to an abrupt termination, since one or the other must be run through. As it happened, it was the officer who met with this fate. He was so angry that he lost his head entirely; and his wound gave him considerable pain also and the result was that Dick ran him through in a very few moments.

The officer dropped his sword, gave utterance to a gasping cry and fell from the log into the stream, and his body went rolling and tumbling down the swiftly flowing current.

"Quick, Bob; we must get away from here at once!" cried Dick as he leaped back off the log onto the ground. "Run for your life!"

Both youths ran with all their might and succeeded in getting around behind a large boulder before the redcoats recovered from the stupor of horror and amazement that held them motionless for a few moments after their commander had met with his death.

Then they aroused themselves and rushed forward, many of them firing their muskets at random, so excited were they. Of course, none of the bullets came anywhere near Dick and Bob, who were for the time being safe.

They decided to do some more work while they had the opportunity. They had muskets with them, the weapons having been left leaning against the boulder, and they secured the guns and succeeded in dropping the first two redcoats off the log into the stream. This put a damper on the others who were about to attempt the same thing, but deciding that somebody would have to risk losing their lives for the good of all, they again started forward. Dick and Bob now brought their pistols into play, and as each had four they were enabled to fire four shots apiece,

and succeeded in dropping six more of the redcoats off the log.

"Well, we seem to be doing something for the great cause, Bob!" said Dick.

"Yes, we have done very well so far; but I am afraid we have about exhausted our resources."

"I fear so, myself. Well, we have done pretty well, considering that we have been going it alone, with none to aid us."

"That is what I think. We have been fighting against great odds, and so far have more than held our own."

"Yes; but now we must retreat, for here they come!"

While the youths were talking they were busily engaged reloading their muskets, but before they could get this finished several of the redcoats had succeeded in getting across the stream and were advancing.

Dick and Bob promptly retreated, working away at their muskets as they went. They were able, as a result of a great deal of practice, to load as they walked, and they succeeded in getting the muskets and the pistols also loaded.

They kept on retreating, however, and watched for a place where they could make another stand. At last they came to a place where there was a hill to cross. It was not a very high hill, but it would give them opportunities for making a stand, and they decided to make the most of them.

They took up positions behind trees and waited till the redcoats came in range, and then they opened fire. They were good shots, and they were careful to take good aim before firing, so did remarkable execution. They dropped seven of the enemy out of ten shots fired.

This, of course, angered the redcoats terribly and they were wild to get revenge on the bold youths who were making such a great fight even against such great odds. They uttered wild yells, and rushed up the hill at the best speed of which they were capable. They fired a couple of volleys, but they did not take aim, so no damage was done to anything save the trees.

But when the redcoats got to the top of the hill the youths were not there. They were well down toward the foot of it, on the farther side, retreating and reloading the weapons and getting in shape to make another stand.

"How many have we killed, Dick?" asked Bob, as they were hastening along.

"If I counted right, it is fifteen, Bob," was the reply.

"Fifteen, eh? That's what I made it, too, so I think it is the correct number. Well, fifteen from one hundred leaves only eighty-five, Dick."



"'Only' eighty-five, Bob?" with a laugh.

"Yes, 'only'; that isn't such a very great number."

"No; and I hope to make it less before we reach the home of the Lawrences."

"That's right; I hope we will be able to cut the number down quite materially."

"If we can get rid of enough of them so as to somewhat even it up and make them no more in number than our Patriot Band, then we will be able to give them a fight that they will remember for a while—such of them as succeed in getting away alive."

"That's right; what's the matter with our killing the whole gang, Dick?"

"That is rather a large contract, I fear, Bob," with a smile.

"We are fighting against great odds, I know, but if we keep on cutting them down the odds will be greatly reduced before very long."

"True; well, we'll keep at it as long as we can."

Presently the youths had their weapons reloaded, and selecting a favorable spot they paused and made another stand, holding out till they had fired the ten shots; and, as in the former instance, they dropped seven of the redcoats.

"That makes twenty-two that are out of the fight, Dick," said Bob, in a tone of satisfaction. "Oh, I guess we are doing pretty well, even though we are going it alone, as it were."

"You are right, Bob; I guess the redcoats will begin to have some respect for patriot soldiers, after a while, and be willing to acknowledge that they can do a little bit in the fighting line."

"Well, if they don't acknowledge it in words they will know it in their own minds, Dick."

Again the youths retreated, and as in the former instance the redcoats rushed forward, yelling like fiends, and shooting at a great rate. As the ground was almost level here, some of the bullets came dangerously near the youths, but luckily none took effect.

Dick and Bob were such veterans, however, that the ziping of the bullets had no effect on their nerves. They were used to it and went ahead, retreating, and kept steadily at work reloading their weapons.

When this had been successfully accomplished they again made a stand, and this time they dropped six of their pursuers.

"That makes twenty-eight who are out of the fight," said Bob. "We are doing very well, indeed, Dick."

"Yes, so we are, Bob."

"And we'll keep right on with the good work!"

"Yes, that is what we will do."

The youths were so tough and wiry, and in such perfect health and condition that they had no difficulty in keeping ahead of the redcoats. Indeed, the latter were already almost exhausted. They were not used to running, and the exertion was rapidly telling on them. They could march at the regulation pace all day, but not being accustomed to running they were speedily out of breath.

This made the work of the youths comparatively easy and simple. They had no trouble in reloading their weapons and making stands, and they knew that as soon as they had discharged the weapons they could easily get out of range of the enemy.

They kept up this work for an hour, and it proved to be very costly for the British soldiers, for by the time the vicinity of the Lawrence home was reached the redcoats had lost nearly half their force. Indeed, to be explicit, there were only fifty-four of the British left; the others had all fallen by the wayside, victims to the marksmanship of Dick and Bob.

The redcoats were determined to catch the youths, however, if possible, and put them to death.

"They have killed and wounded nearly fifty of our number," said the man who had taken the leadership, "and we are not British soldiers if we do not follow them to the end of the world rather than give up and let them escape!"

"That is what we will do!" one of his men replied. "We must not let those young fiends escape!"

"No, no! Follow them—follow them to the end of the world, if necessary!" was the cry, and so the redcoats kept up the pursuit.

As they drew near to the Lawrence home Dick and Bob kept a sharp lookout. They had left word for Fred Lawrence to be there with the band of boy patriots, and if he was there they would be able to give the redcoats a reception they would not soon forget.

When they were a third of a mile away from the house Dick said: "Let's run at the top of our speed, and get there as quickly as possible, Bob."

"All right."

They leaped forward and ran with all their might. The redcoats did not at first realize what the fugitives were doing, but when they did they tried to increase their own speed—without much result, however. They were about fagged out.

As the youths drew near the house they looked in that direction eagerly, and presently an exclamation of delight escaped Dick.



"I see them, Bob!" he cried; "they are there, in the yard! Hurry, and we will take up our position behind the stable, which is far enough this way so as to enable us to keep the redcoats from reaching the house."

The youths hastened forward and it was soon evident that the youths in the yard saw them, for they came running to the fence and gazed down the road. As Dick and Bob drew near, Dick yelled out:

"Come on down this way and get behind the stable; there are a lot of redcoats coming, and we must give them a thrashing!"

The youths hastened to obey, and a few moments later Dick and Bob, panting but triumphant, were among their friends.

"How many of the redcoats are there, Dick?" asked Fred Lawrence.

"About fifty, Fred."

"Then they don't outnumber us any to speak of."

"No; and they are all tired out, so we have the advantage of them in that respect. Bob and I have led them a merry chase of about three miles, and have kept popping them over all the way along the route."

"We dropped forty-six of them," said Bob, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"What!" exclaimed Fred, while exclamations escaped all. "You don't mean to say that you two fellows killed forty-six of the redcoats!"

"Yes, that's just what we did do!"

"And you are not even wounded? How in the world did you do it?"

"Oh, we kept stopping and pegging away at them, and as we happen to be good shots we generally brought our men down."

"Well, you are wonders, you two!" said Fred, his voice vibrating with admiration.

"Well, if we two can kill and disable forty-six of the redcoats, the fifty of us ought to be able to easily thrash fifty of the redcoats, don't you think?" asked Dick.

"I should say so!"

"All right; just feel that way about it and we will do it and not half try. Are you boys good shots?"

"Yes, most of us are what might be termed fair shots," replied Fred.

"You can bring down a squirrel out of a tree with a rifle bullet?"

"Yes."

"Well, then you can't miss as big a target as a full-grown man." Then he raised his voice. "Boys," he went on, "don't get the 'buck ague.' Just remember that a man is

as easy to kill or disable as a squirrel, and that if you kill or disable him he will be unable to hurt you, and take good aim before you fire. That is the secret. Take good aim. Don't fire at random, for if you do you will not hit anybody, and the redcoats will be free to come right on and attack us. On the other hand, if you take good, careful aim and fire when I give the word, one volley will be all that will be necessary, and the redcoats will not want to come any farther—the few who will remain on their feet. They will think only of getting away from this dangerous locality as quickly as possible. Now, remember: Take careful aim. They are almost within range. Wait a moment. Now—take aim, all!"

The youths had listened attentively to Dick's words, and it was evident that they were impressed with the soundness of his reasoning. Besides, the fact that Dick and Bob had succeeded in killing forty-six of the redcoats without any assistance whatever, had had a great deal of effect, and the youths felt that fifty of them would be a match for a hundred redcoats. Consequently their nerves were like steel, and when they leveled their rifles Dick saw that the weapons were as steady as a rock.

"Good!" he said to himself. "The boys are all right. I pity those redcoats!"

He waited till the British soldiers were within range, and then cried out, sharply: "Fire!"

Crash, roar! The youths fired at the word, and the volley did wonderful execution. At least thirty of the redcoats went down, either dead or wounded. Cries, groans and curses went up on the air.

It was a terrible scene and the redcoats were almost paralyzed. Before the youths could draw pistols and fire another volley, however, the remaining redcoats had recovered from their dismay, and, whirling, they took to their heels and ran with all their might. They had not been expecting such a reception; indeed, they had not seen the party of youths until too late to retreat, and had been forced to meet the volley.

"Come back!" called out Dick. "Come back and bury your dead and take care of your wounded. I give you my word of honor that you will not be fired upon."

The redcoats probably understood what Dick said, but they were so demoralized that they did not at once stop. They kept on running until they were well out of range, and then they halted. They were not yet out of hearing, and Dick again called out:

"Come back! You must bury your dead and look after your wounded. We don't wish to be bothered with having to do that work."



Presently one of the men came forward, waving a white handkerchief. When he was within twenty yards he paused "You give me your word of honor that we will not be fired upon if we come back?" he asked.

"Certainly," replied Dick. "You need have no fears whatever."

"Very well, then, we will come back and get to work." The man turned and waved to his comrades, and they advanced. It was evident that they were a bit suspicious, and they kept their eyes on the youths, but when Fred had brought a spade they went to work, the men taking turns, and after an hour a big enough excavation had been made to receive all the dead soldiers. They were placed therein and covered up, and then the problem of moving the wounded men, of whom there were eight, was to be met.

"If you will let us have a team and wagon we will return it," the redcoat leader said; "I will send it back at once after we reach Charleston."

Fred went and asked his father about the matter and Mr. Lawrence said the redcoats could have the team and wagon. The team was hitched up and then the wounded men were placed on some straw placed on the bottom of the wagon-bed, and the redcoats took their departure, but not until Dick had given the leader a talking to.

"Give my compliments to the commandant at Charleston," said Dick, "and tell him not to send any more of his soldiers out here on a burning and pillaging expedition, for if he does we will wipe them off the face of the earth! Do you understand?"

"Yes," the man replied; "I understand, and will tell him just what you have said."

"See that you do!"

The redcoats had just disappeared from view when Mr. Wilson put in an appearance. He had been running, and was panting.

"What's the matter?" asked Fred Lawrence, who saw that something was up.

"Elsie!" cried Mr. Wilson. "Black Gabe has stolen Elsie and carried her away!"

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE RESCUE.

A wild cry of rage and anguish escaped the lips of Fred Lawrence. Elsie was his sweetheart, and to think that she should be carried off by the scoundrel, Black Gabe, was enough to cause him anguish.

"Who will go with me in search of the scoundrel?" cried Fred.

"I will!" cried Dick.

"And I!" from Bob.

"And I!" came in a chorus from the youths.

Fred selected a dozen of the youths and the party set out, after getting all the information out of Mr. Wilson that he possessed.

"Won't Black Gabe take Elsie to the cavern?" asked Dick.

Mr. Wilson looked at the youth in surprise, he being amazed at the knowledge which Dick possessed, but he shook his head and replied: "No, he won't go there, for he has cut loose from the leadership of the band. In fact, he and I had a quarrel, and it was on account of Elsie. He wanted to marry her, and when Elsie told me she would rather die than marry him, I told him he couldn't have her, and he said he would have her whether I liked it or not. Some of the other members of the band took sides with me, and finally he left us in a huff. I didn't think of such a thing as that he would try to steal Elsie away, however, but he did it; and now the question is: Where has he taken her?"

"I rather think I know where he has taken her," said Fred as they were hastening through the timber.

"Where?" asked Mr. Wilson.

"Do you remember that Gabe has a cabin over on the bank of the Edisto River where he goes of a winter to hunt and trap?"

An exclamation escaped the lips of Mr. Wilson. "That is it; and I'll wager that you are right, Fred!" he cried. "That is certainly the most likely place."

"How far is it?" asked Dick.

"Oh, only an hour-and-a-half's walk."

"We can get there before dark, then?"

"Yes, easy."

They hastened onward, and after an hour and a half of brisk walking Fred called a halt. "We are almost to the little opening on the bank of the stream where the cabin is located," he said. "I think we had better investigate before advancing, don't you, Dick?"

"Perhaps it would be best to do so."

"Let's you and I go forward, then; the rest may follow slowly."

"Very well."

Fred and Dick crept forward and were soon at the edge of the little opening, which consisted of perhaps an acre of ground. At the farther side, right on the bank of the river was a small, log cabin.



"The — is!" suddenly whispered Fred, in excitement.

He was right. Black Gabe had just emerged from the cabin and was walking toward the river. He had a bucket in his hand and was evidently going for water. The youths waited till he was out of sight around the corner of the cabin, and then they gave the signal, a low whistle, for their comrades to come ahead, and then emerged from the edge of the timber and hastened across the open space toward the cabin.

They had just reached the door when Black Gabe put in an appearance, coming back around the house; and the instant his eyes fell upon the two youths a curse escaped him and he leaped forward, drawing a pistol as he did so.

Crack! Dick had fired. He was quicker than the big fellow, and his shot was a good one, too; for while it did not kill the man it struck him in the right shoulder, giving him a severe wound. He dropped the pistol as if it had become suddenly hot, and a series of curses escaped his lips as he bounded toward the youths, evidently bent on fighting both of them even though he had but one hand to do it with.

Crack! This time Fred had fired, and his bullet struck the desperate man fair in the chest. Down went Black Gabe at full length, and he clawed and struggled in agony.

"You—have killed—me, curse—you!" he cried. "You have—given—me my—death wound!"

"And served you right, you girl-stealer!" cried Fred, fiercely. "Where is Elsie?"

"Here, Fred!" cried a joyous voice from within the cabin. "I am here, safe and unharmed, but tied hand and foot."

"Thank heaven, you are safe and unharmed, Elsie!" cried Fred, and he leaped through the doorway into the cabin, and in an instant was at the girl's side, cutting her bands. The instant she was free he seized the girl in his arms and hugged and kissed her, and called her all the endearing names he could think of.

And Elsie? She evidently liked it. At any rate she did not make any effort to free herself, and it is a fact that she held her mouth in such fashion that it was easy for Fred to get at it. It may have been because she was so excited, however. I will leave that for my girl readers to decide.

By the time Mr. Wilson and the youths reached the cabin Black Gabe was dead. They gazed upon the face of the dead man without showing much signs of feeling pity for him.

"He deserved it!" said one.

"Yes, you are right about that," coincided Bob; "a

fellow who will steal a girl and carry her off against her will, as he did, is too big a scoundrel to be let live."

"Let's carry the body around and place it where she won't see it," said Dick, nodding toward the cabin.

This suggestion met with approval, and five or six of the youths lifted the dead man and carried him around behind the cabin.

"Is—is he—dead?" asked Elsie, as she emerged from the cabin in company with Fred. She looked fearfully around her as she spoke.

"Yes, he's dead, Miss Elsie," replied Dick.

"Oh, I'm sorry; and yet I'm glad, too, for he might have done Fred or some of you folks harm had he lived."

"It is just as well that he is dead," said Dick.

Then he went back around the cabin and assisted the others to dig a grave, they using swords and knives for the purpose. It did not take them long to finish, and as soon as Black Gabe had been placed in his last resting-place, they went back around to the front of the cabin and rejoined the rest of the party.

As there was nothing to remain for, they set out; as Elsie could not walk so fast as the rest it took about two hours to reach the home of Mr. Wilson. It was now just coming dark, and he asked the youths to stop and take supper, but they said they would go on to the Lawrence home, and then they would disperse to their own homes.

Dick and Bob went to the Lawrence home, and fearing that the British might try to get revenge for the treatment their force had received, by sending another force. Dick named four of the youths to go out and do scout duty the first half of the night. Then he named four more, who were instructed to relieve the first four at midnight. This would make it almost impossible for the British to surprise them.

The wagon was brought back, the two soldiers who brought it bringing saddle horses on which to ride back and they took their departure at once, seemingly not wishing to answer questions.

Dick thought this a bit suspicious, and he cautioned the youths who were doing scout duty to be very careful and keep their eyes open. They said they would, and took their departure to do the work to which Dick had assigned them.

Dick instructed the youths to come back as soon as they had eaten supper and go into camp at the Lawrence place. "We may have to fight the British before morning," he said; "and if so, we must be ready for them. I didn't like the actions of the two who brought back the team and wagon."



"I think they intend making an attack on the people of the settlement to-night," said Bob; "and we want to be ready for them."

The result was that the "Patriot Band" was on hand, by ten o'clock, and the youths were one and all ready for anything that might come up. Their encounter with the redcoats of the afternoon had given them immense confidence, and they would not have been afraid of a regiment of British soldiers. As confidence is a valuable requisite in cases of this kind, Dick did not do or say anything to disturb them in the feeling.

It was about half-past ten o'clock when a party of men rode up, coming from the opposite direction from that in which the redcoats would be expected to come. When they got within the radius of the light thrown out by the camp-fire, Dick recognized the leader as being General Marion, the "Swamp Fox."

The youth ran forward, and, as the general alighted, greeted him pleasantly and eagerly. "I am indeed glad to see you, General Marion!" the youth exclaimed. "I have a letter for you from the commander-in-chief."

"Ah, Dick, is that you?" the "Swamp Fox" exclaimed. "I am glad to see you. And you have a letter for me, you say?"

"Yes, sir; here it is."

Dick drew the document from his pocket and handed to the general, who at once broke the seal and read the contents.

"Good!" he exclaimed when he had finished; "General Washington wishes me to co-operate with General Gates, and I shall do so at once."

"Hadn't you better remain here with us to-night?" asked Dick.

"I think we will do so, Dick. We have ridden far to-day, and horses and men are weary. A good rest will do us good."

"I should think so."

General Marion inquired the reason of the gathering of the youths, and Dick explained.

"So there is danger of an attack to-night, eh?" Marion exclaimed. "Well, let them come on. We will help you give them the thrashing they deserve."

He complimented Dick and Bob on their wonderful fight against such great odds of the afternoon, when they had killed forty-six redcoats, alone and unaided, and he complimented the patriot youths who had put the redcoats to flight later on.

The youths were well pleased to be praised by so great a man as the "Swamp Fox."

At last, no alarm having been given by the scouts, Marion and his men, and Dick and his youths lay down and went to sleep.

No attack was made that night, and next morning Marion and his men bade Dick and his companions good-by, and went on their way. They were headed in the direction in which they expected to come upon General Gates and his army.

Dick and Bob remained in the neighborhood a week and helped repulse the redcoats a second time, and then, feeling that the people were in no immediate danger, they bade their friends good-by and started back for the North.

They had practically played a "lone hand" in this affair, but although they had been forced to fight against great odds they had given the redcoats much the worst of it and were happy.

#### THE END.

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